

# DISOBEDIENCE.

*A NOVEL.*

---

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

---

*BY THE AUTHOR OF PLAIN SENSE.*

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“ Unlimited obedience is due only to the Universal Father of Heaven and Earth. My Parents may be mad or foolish; may be wicked and malicious; may be erroneously religious, or absurdly scrupulous. I am not bound to mandates, either positive or negative, which either religion condemns, or reason rejects. When I suffer for my own crimes, when I may be sued for my own debts, I may judge, by a parity of reason, of my own happiness. The parent's moral right can arise only from his kindness, and his civil right only from his money.”

JOHNSON'S LETTERS TO MRS. THRALE.

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VOL. II.

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## DISOBEDIENCE.

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### CHAP. I.

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MARY'S confinement, however, lasted a much shorter time than Lady Caroline had threatened. Sir James had not accompanied his family to town, when Lady Caroline, for the purpose of superintending Mary's education, had been obliged to remove thither.— All the pleasure that it might have been expected that he would derive from the conversation, and interesting manners of a child so long estranged from him, and now so

newly found, could not compensate, in his opinion, for the solitude that prevails in all the accustomed London haunts of the great world, during the months of September and October.—He had therefore passed this melancholy season in the usual occupations of a man of fashion at that time of the year.—He had attended several races ; he had visited one or two sea bathing places ; he had killed several brace of partridges, and, when winter approached, he had been wholly occupied by the pleasures of the chace.—He had indeed, in the intervals of his more serious business, several times visited his house in town.—There he had found reason to disapprove of the severity of Lady Caroline towards her *élève* ; but he could not prevail with himself to forego amusements he liked so much better, than becoming the guardian of the happiness of his child.—He saw, too, with much satisfaction, the progress that Mary made in all those arts that had so assiduously endeavoured to be taught her ; and assured himself, that the winter would not pass before he should be able to

form



form such a matrimonial establishment for her as would emancipate her from the tyranny of Lady Caroline, and fulfil his most ambitious wishes.

She was now, however, come to reside in town, and was only accidentally absent on the day, when Miss Challoner's letter had fallen into Lady Caroline's hands.

On his return it was shewn to him, and Lady Caroline informed him of the punishment she had inflicted upon Mary.

“ How much have you suffered your passion to overcome your judgment ! ” cried he. “ Had you treated her with contempt on such a manifest dereliction of all taste, and suffered the vulgar impertinence of this silly Miss to have operated upon her pride, this letter would have done more towards driving her swain from her heart, than all the rage and severity in your power will ever be able to do. I see compulsion will have no effect upon her mind ; we must only have

recourse to it in disposing of her person, if, in the event, we should find all other methods fail ; and here I will join with you ;— and you may be assured there is no severity I shall scruple, rather than not dispose of her in marriage as I please.—But our business at present is to conceal this intention, and try to win her to our party, to make her think as nine-tenths of her sex do think, and as it is wonderful to me that she does not already think.”

“ Will you,” said Lady Caroline, passionately, “ suffer her to entertain a hope that we will ever give our sanction to her monstrous passion ?”

“ Such duplicity will *not* be useless,” said Sir James ; “ I would explain myself fully, as to the impossibility of our ever giving such a sanction, but without passion or threatening, which will only serve to throw her into the heroism of opposition, and then leave it to time, and the allurements of this gay town, to do the rest. It will be time enough when we have received such proposals

sals as we approve, to resort to more violent measures."

"I confess I have not patience, when I think of the mean depravity of her mind," said Lady Caroline; "and it was with difficulty I forebore from beating her.—Had she uttered one saucy word, I should have struck her."

"Well," returned Sir James, "let us send for her now; I will explain our resolutions and designs to her."

When Mary made her appearance, Sir James extolled much the lenity and kindness with which she had been treated, and of which, he said, he supposed she was fully sensible. He imputed, however, the error into which she had fallen wholly to mistake, and the not perfectly understanding her own advantage, and the intentions of her family. But (added he, fondly taking her hand) all admonitions on this subject must now be needless.—I will not say you are *rejected*, with all the insolence of pure proud vulgarity;

for I wish not to excite your blushes, or to add to your mortification. It will soon be forgotten in the sense to which you must now be awakened, of what is due to your connexions and yourself.—Nor need I tell you that no intercourse *whatever* will be allowed you with this vulgar family, because I am sure that your mind now revolts from all idea of such an intercourse ; and no doubt but you will hear, with gratitude and pleasure, that you are destined to adorn one of the highest ranks in the kingdom ; a station well suited to your beauty, my love ; and so certainly secured to you, that no efforts, from whatever quarter, can disappoint your exaltation. Be it your part to fit yourself, by an assiduous application to the means now in your power, for a situation to which you are equally called by your personal charms, by your birth, and by your fortune ; and now, my love, let us forget every thing that is disagreeable (added he, kissing her) go, humble yourself to Lady Caroline, and ask

ask her pardon for the uneasiness you have undesignedly given her."

Mary remained silent and immovable, not having, at that moment, courage to avow the constancy of her affections to William, nor duplicity enough to affect an intention to sacrifice them.

"I hope, child," said Lady Caroline, "you are fully convinced of the truth of all that Sir James has said?"

"I am not rejected by *William*," said Mary; "and I shall never cease to love him."

"There, Sir James," exclaimed Lady Caroline, "you hear——"

"Nothing that surprises me," interrupted Sir James; "in time, my dear, you will think very differently; you know it is your duty to obey your parents; you will not scruple, I am sure, to tell Lady Caroline you are sorry you have given her pain."

“ I would not give any one pain,” said Mary ; and I know not that I have done any thing that could give Lady Caroline pain.”

“ I knew you were unconscious of the consequences of what you had done,” said Sir James, “ and Lady Caroline forgives you.”

Lady Caroline gave no assent to this assurance ; but Sir James, seeming to take it for granted that the reconciliation was complete, made Mary sit down, and began to converse on indifferent subjects.

Mary was as little duped by the art and blandishments of Sir James, as she had been intimidated by the violence and passion of Lady Caroline. They equally served to confirm her in her affections for the mild sincerity of character to which she had been accustomed from her birth, in the valley of Llamamon, and to confirm her in the mingled contempt and aversion which she had

had conceived for the manners and principles of those with whom she now associated.

To oppose, however, either Sir James or Lady Caroline, she felt was in vain. She found herself so closely watched, that, had she had any encouragement, from the probability of her letters being received, to make the experiment, she could not have written. All that there remained for her to do, was to strengthen herself in her resolution to maintain the constancy of her affections, in spite of all opposition, and to console herself under her present disagreeable circumstances, by a strong confidence in the faith and affection of William, and thus quietly to wait for happier times.

Happy, indeed, was it for Mary at this period, that nature had bestowed upon her a cheerful spirit, which, well says the wise man, is a continual feast; and in truth it was the only feast that poor Mary had. Not that Lady Caroline *always*, or perhaps *ever meant*

to torment her ; but all that Mary did, or omitted to do, was a perpetual irritation to Lady Caroline's temper. She had no taste for the natural beauties, and elegant simplicity of Mary's character.—All that was not according to the rule of high life, and the highest polish of artificial good breeding, was martyrdom to Lady Caroline either to hear or see ; and not being of a disposition that led her to suffer alone, she was never pained herself, that she did not double and treble the pain upon Mary. Her eagerness too, to correct the rusticities which so much shocked her, defeated her own end. Mary became careless of acquiring a behaviour which cost her so much chiding before it could be learnt ; and seeing all the absurdity of Lady Caroline's anxieties, and the ridicule of much of the manners she was endeavoured to be taught, she laughed, in secret, at both the one and the other ; and sometimes, half maliciously, affected ignorance in rules of behaviour, in which, by this time, she was perfectly instructed. In the mean

time, she fell into a manner of her own which, with her uncommon beauty, and the artless simplicity and innocent archness of her character, procured her more admiration than all the artificial graces Lady Caroline was so eager she should possess, could have excited.

The men thought her charming ; and the women, perhaps to conceal the envy they could not but feel, allowed she was so. Lady Caroline, however, scarcely suffered her to appear any where except at home. The work of education went on unremitedly ;— nor was there an hour in the day, in which Mary was not practising some lesson, or preparing herself to receive the admonitions of her instructors.

She had an eager desire to make herself mistress of the languages that were taught her ; and her progress was proportionate to her desire. She also attended to the instructions of her drawing-master with diligence and pleasure ; but her dancing and

music-master wearied her to death. Not that she did not love both music and dancing ; but the minute drudgery of the rudiments of both appeared insufferably tedious to her ; she had been accustomed to carol her wild airs without rule, and without restraint, and to bound to the notes of a violin, in exact time, it is true, but in steps of her own composition ; and she listened, with very little patience, to the technical terms and distinctions of art, made use of by Signor Martinelli and Monsieur Blanché.

## CHAP. II.

ONE morning, when Mary was sitting in sad expectation of these her daily tormentors, she was told that there was a person below who wished to speak with her.

“A person? What kind of person?” said she.

“A sort of a country looking person;—not a gentleman; without powder; yet not a bad looking person either.—The servant thought he said his name was Challoner.

Mary

Mary made but one step from the sofa whereon she was sitting, to the top of the stairs, and but two from the top to the bottom.

“ My dear—dear William ! I know it was false ; I know you would never forget me.”

Then recollecting she was observed, and shrinking from the eager gaze of the footmen who were waiting in the hall, “ Come, this way, my friend,” said she, and tell me of all in dear Merionethshire.”

So saying, she took him by the arm, and they went together to the room she had just before quitted.

Six months residence in London, change of dress, and keeping what is called the best company, had made a striking alteration in the appearance of Mary. Happily for William, and for herself, all within was as pure, and as unsophisticated, as when she breathed the

the free air of the Welch mountains.—But William, at this instant, could judge only by intervals.

He stood looking on her, for a moment, with a kind of melancholy surprise; then cast a look of disgust on the splendor that surrounded her, and sunk upon a chair, the victim, for the moment, of ill-founded mistrust, and torturing despair.

“ Good Heaven !” cried Mary, “ what is the matter? What misfortune has happened? My dear old mother? She is well? Our kind Mr. Ellis? No harm has happened to him, I hope? Your own friends——.”

“ All, all are well,” returned William;—“ as well (continued he, with a deep drawn sigh) as they can be, now they have lost you.”

“ Then what ails you? Oh! William, and is it thus we meet, after so tedious an absence? And have they told me true?”

“ Would to Heaven, my dear Mary,” said William, “ I could see you in your rufflet

russet brown jacket again, and your round eared cap, dancing on the green before our good vicar's door."

" Oh ! now I see what you would be at ; and so you think this quantity of fine sweeping muslin, that makes me stumble at every step ; this gaudy ribbon in my hair ; these shining glasses, and their glittering frames ; this carpet, that pretends to be covered with flowers, and yet yields no sweets ; you think that all these nothings, which are no part of me, have made me forget my very heart and soul ?"

" Oh ! Mary ! so great—so mighty a change of circumstances !—and so if you were to be made King of all England, William, I suppose I must not be your Queen ?"

" If I were King of twenty Englands, I would forswear them all, if you would not share their sovereignty.—And yet you suppose a little muslin and gilding can make me forget you :—Thank you for the compliment, Sir," said she, making him a courtesy.

" My

" My dear Mary, it is not *you* I doubt ; but the people on whom you depend."

" Yes, I recollect when *your* father forbade you to come to my old mother's any more, and said I was no match for such an one as you ; you never came near me any more, and we have never spoken to each other since."

" Nay, but Mary, there is a difference.—Between my honesty and yours, I suppose you mean, for I really know of no other that can make you true, and me false."

" Upon my word, you are in a very civil humour to day."

" Dearest Mary, forgive me ; but when I see and hear——"

" You see and hear me ; such as I always was.—What signifies whether in a brown jacket, or a muslin gown ? Here's my hand, William ; and take that, and my word, that there is no person upon earth that can make me change my mind but yourself ; and then it will not be *I* who change, but *you*."

William caught her in his arms.

" No,

“No, no,” said she—no raptures; have done with your suspicions and your fooleries, and let us sit down to sober narrative; I have much to tell, and much to hear, and we may be interrupted every minute.”

“But you seem to be mistress of yourself, and not to be afraid of acknowledging me publicly.”

“As to acknowledging you,” said Mary, “the sound of your name put all other thoughts to flight: I should have ran to welcome you, though I had thrown down my lady mother in my haste; but, as to being mistress of myself—ah! William, how are you mistaken! no, no, I am mistress of nothing but your heart, and my own affections.”

“Dearest Mary——”

“Be quick; we have no time for nonsense:—First, there’s my papa, Sir James, with his soft looks and kind words; but has a hard heart, notwithstanding, William.—Then there’s my mamma, Lady Caroline—

all

all passion and fury ; and lastly, there's my governess."

" Governess !"

" Yes ; for whatever you might think of me in Wales, here I am a booby—a chit—fit only to be kept in my nursery, and set in a corner when I am naughty.—Nay, I have not yet learnt to walk, or to eat, or to speak ; therefore I have a governess to teach me all such, necessary acquirements.—" My dear ma'am, no running, I beseech—walk thus—Oh ! fie ! no young lady cuts her meat so. Your spoon, I beg—what a word was that—pray let me never hear it again ;—I fear you are incorrigible."—What think you of all this, William ? But this is nothing ; she is upon me from morning till night, for some of my *horrid awkward tricks*, as my mamma Caroline calls them, and which really rob her of all the peace of her life.—Luckily she is out this morning, upon special business.—There I have a singing-master and a dancing-master."

" Singing

“ Singing and dancing ! my dear Mary ; what lark, what blackbird warbled like you ? What goat, what lamb bounded with half your grace and agility ?”

“ Larks and blackbirds ! goats and lambs ! Oh ! if my Lady Caroline heard you, she would swoon at the sound.—No, William, I can neither sing nor dance ; I have the capabilities, as both Signor Martinelli and Monsieur Blanché assure mamma, and with their care—their aid, I shall sing and dance *à Merville*, that is, I believe I shall make people stare.—I have but little patience with my music and singing-master, though they do know more of these matters here than we do in Wales ; and for dancing, you would die with laughing, if you were to see me under Monsieur Blanché’s laws ;—but I am ready to die with vexation :—First position ; second position ;—and now jump, if you please, Mademoiselle ; as if we did not know how to jump in Wales ; but all these labours are necessary, that my mamma may not expire with my *gaucheries*, that is, my left-handed

handed tricks ; and that she may not sink with shame, when she introduces me into the world ; for at present I see nobody but at home, and am considered there as an infant.—Mamma had thoughts of making me pass for fifteen only, but the date of her voyage to India being well known, this was impossible ; so she is obliged to content herself with deplored her unhappy fate, in being the mother of so much rusticity, in the form of a girl of eighteen, and with entreating all her friends to pity her, and to assist her in polishing the “ rough hewn statue.” Dear William, sometimes I laugh, and sometimes I cry, on finding myself the object of such provoking grief, and such unnecessary cares. The ladies call me the little savage, and the gentlemen the *belle sauvage*, which means pretty, you know, William ; and to tell you the truth, I think some of them do not like me the worse for my *gaucheries*, as my mamma calls them.—And there’s an old gentleman that visits here, who swears it is a pity to spoil so much nature ; but mamma says

says he is a savage himself, and bids him hold his tongue. Then, William, I learn French and Italian, and these I learn with all my might and main ; for when I know more languages, I can read more books ; and then I think with what delight I shall teach you ; and when your day's work is done, how happy we shall be, while you read aloud, and I sew or spin."

" Will such happy days ever come ?" said William, with a sigh.

" What should hinder them ?" returned Mary ; " at one and twenty I shall be my own mistress ; and you know I was never in haste to be married, but have always told you, you must work hard ; and when you had a snug little cottage to take me to, if it were no bigger than a nut-shell, with a neat farm about it, I would be your wife ; but since your friends do not like me, I will be no ways obliged to them ; and we won't come together, William, either to starve or to beg."

" I

“ I could have taught myself patience, perhaps,” said William, “ had you continued at Llamamon ; for I should then have seen you every week at least, and I should have had nothing to fear ; but here, learning every day new lessons, how to forget Llamamon and me ; surrounded by Lords and ladies ; growing used to all these fineries, till they become necessary to you.—Oh ! Mary, how can I hope that I shall have merit enough at the end of three long years, to bring the delights of your childhood to your remembrance ? or that you will quit, for me ease, elegance, and luxury—for labour, rusticity, and a bare competence ?”

“ Unkind William !” said Mary, bursting into tears.

“ Nay,” cried William, “ how can I *desire* it ? How can I presume to be so selfish ?”

“ Unkind William !” repeated Mary.

“ Heaven is my witness,” said William, “ that you wrong me.—My heart is breaking, when I think what you must lose for my sake, or that I must lose you.”

“ Well,

" Well, go, go, then," said Mary, sobbing, " I see how it would be, if you were to be rich ; and you may be rich ; you may marry Miss Fluellin, and then you will forget me ; and then all will be well, you know."

" No, Mary," said William, sorrowfully ; " I shall never forget you."

" Nor I you," said Mary ; " but since you dare not trust me, you may do as you please, and I will do—as I can."

" Tell me," said William, " does Lady Caroline know of our love ?"

" To be sure she does," returned Mary ; " do you think I would leave Llamamon willingly, and not see you ? I begged, and I prayed ; I cried—and I almost swore that I would not stir till you came here ; but it signified nothing ; I must go with my kind mamma ; I should travel in a fine coach ;—I should have fine clothes ; I should live in a fine house ; I should have fine servants to wait upon me ; no body should say me nay ; and when I went out, I need not walk ;—I should have a coach, or a chair, and be carried

carried about from one fine place to another. Oh! I should soon forget Llamamon;—I cared not a straw for all these fine things; and when they talked of forgetting Llamamon, I cried as if my heart would have broke; and so my papa and one of the footmen took me up gently between them, papa saying very kind things all the while, and they carried me to the coach; my dear old mother crying all the time sadly, but telling me, ah! how could she? I was going to be very happy; and then my mamma got into the coach, and she tried to comfort me; and she called me her love, and her angel, and said not a word about my gaucheries, and my rusticity, or the rough hewn statue. I was her darling, and her joy; and I should have all I wished, and she loved me dearly, and she hoped I should love her;—well, and I began to love her; and I thought she would love you too; and that, as I should be richer than Miss Fluellen, your father would be cross no longer, and we should all be happy. So I cheered up, and was as blithe

as a bird ; only that I thought it a little un-kind that she would not let me see you ;—only Sir James said he could not stay, because of business.

“ But, would you think it, William ? all this was false and hollow ; that very night lady mamma, and papa, Sir James, let me into the secret.—After I was gone to bed at the inn, in a little room, through that in which they were sitting, as I lay tossing and tumbling, and could not sleep, because I was thinking of you, I heard them agree, that they must be very kind and gentle to make me forget Llamamon, and that clown William ;—yes, they called you a clown !—and dazzle me (that was the word) with all the fine things they could think of ;—and when they had polished me, and made me tolerable, then they were to marry me to some lord or other : I was ready to spring out of bed, and tell them I would not be polished, and that I would not forget you ;—but I thought it was better to lie still ; and they went on to say, what a great deal of trouble

trouble they should have with me ; and they wished I had been a boy, because of the name and the title, and a great deal that I did not understand ; and then they quarrelled, but I cannot tell about what.—For my part, I cried with vexation, till, like a child, I cried myself to sleep.

“ And do you think I could love such treacherous people ? Oh ! no ! the next day I was quite altered, and sat melancholy and silent. For a little time they continued kind and gentle ; but mamma soon grew cross, and then she placed Mrs. Governess about me ; and now, between them, I am scolded all day long. From the first, they would scarcely suffer me to mention Llamamon ; and now, if I say any thing like remembering how happy I was there, I am threatened to be punished ; and sometimes I am shut up in my room for days together. What they can hope from this, I know not ; but this I know, that they do not take the way to make me forget Llamamon.”

William could scarcely forbear weeping at this picture of Mary's persecutions.

"At least," said he, "with me you would be sure of a heart that would always love you, and that would rather break than give you a moment's pain."

"What signifies the virtues of your heart to me?" said Mary, "if you dare not trust mine?"

"I dare—I dare," cried William, pressing her to his bosom; "and from this moment I will believe that no time, no circumstance will change your love."

"Keep in that faith," said Mary, "and I defy all the Lady Carolines, and all the Sir James's in the world with their scoldings, and their cajoleries, and dazzlings, to make me forget you for an instant; but it is now your turn.—How comes it, that six long months are gone (for ever since I left Llamanon) and that this is the first day in which I have heard of you?"

"My

" 'My story,' " returned William, " is very short.—" No sooner did I hear from Mr. Ellis the melancholy news of your departure from Llamamon, than I resolved to quit Ireland directly, in spite of all my father's efforts to hinder me. I was, however, detained for a few weeks, by circumstances that I could not foresee, and to which I was compelled to yield. On my return to Llanbeder, I ran, I flew to the dear cottage.—I thought I should have died with grief, when I saw again places where once I was always sure of seeing you, and where you were now no longer to be seen. Our dear mother wept like a child, when she saw me; and I observed, with fresh grief, how much she was gone down since you had left her. I could not help weeping with her, and it was long before we could explain ourselves to each other. At length she told me, that she had heard nothing from you, from within a week after your departure, but that she was sure this was not your fault; that she had answered your letter, she thought, very guardedly;

yet that Lady Caroline had found fault with it, and ordered her to write another, and to advise you to think no more of Llamamon, for that it was right that you should forget us all."

" Ah !" cried Mary, interrupting him ; " then that cruel letter was Lady Caroline's, and not my dear mother's ! yes, yes, it was much more like the one than the other."

" She was sure," continued William, " that her letter would half break your heart, and it more than half broke her's to write you such an one. I impatiently demanded where you were, being resolved to see you, cost what it would ; but she could give me no intelligence on this point.—She said she had been ordered to direct her letter to you in the country, and that yet she had reason to believe you were in town.

" I would immediately have set out for London : But besides that I was not yet my own master, Mr. Ellis advised me to wait where I was, persuaded that you would find some means of letting us hear from you.—

In

In the mean time, every method was taken to induce me to marry Miss Fluellin—need I add, my dear Mary?—in vain.

“ I went every day to the cottage, but no tidings could I learn. At length Eleanor astonished me with the intelligence that my sister had heard from you; that she had been with her at your request, and that she had promised to let you know Eleanor was well; but my sister absolutely refused to say where you were, affirming that I should then know, and that my father had commanded her to keep your abode secret.

“ I returned to Llanbeder, out of breath with haste. I entreated, I threatened, I knelt, I wept, I swore, but all in vain; no rock was more immoveable than my hard-hearted sister. Ah! my dear Mary, why should I distress you with the family disputes that ensued? There was no misery with which my father did not threaten me, if I did not instantly comply with his commands, and become the husband of Deborah; and

there was no misery that I was not determined to embrace, rather than her,

"In the midst of these contests, I attained the age of twenty-one. I was then to make my decision between affluence and Miss Fluellen, and poverty and you. I was not so ignorant as to suppose any more than my father, that if you persevered in your kind thoughts of me, that you would be able to give me more than your dear self; but this was all to me; and gaining fresh hope of your constancy, from your having written to my sister, I comforted myself, that, in any case, we should not be more undone than if you had not been so cruelly snatched from us. I hesitated not, therefore, to reject Miss Fluellen, in the most unequivocal terms; to abandon my paternal roof, and every prospect of fortune, but what could arise from my own industry, and to set out in search of you. Having no clue to guide me, I have wandered about some time over this great city, making all the inquiries I had the wit to think of, and traversing every

street over and over, where I was told it was likely I should find such a family as I described. How long my fruitless search would have continued I know not, had I not yesterday met a servant of Mr. Wynne's; he knew me instantly, and inquired what had brought me to town. I hesitated, and chose not to mention your name.

"What," cried he, "are you come after your old love, who is now a fine lady? If so, faith you may hang yourself, as my master is ready to do; for my sister, who lives with Lady Caroline, says her young lady is only to marry a lord."

"But where," cried I eagerly, "where does Sir James Seabright live?"

"There," cried he, pointing; "I am this moment come from his house."

"I turned hastily from him, meaning to inquire for you directly."

"Where are you going?" said he; "take my word for it you have no chance of seeing your love now, or even of being admitted within the doors. The family are just gone

to dinner ; and if you are not quite sure the young lady is mistress of herself, which, from what I learn, she is not—your only hope of seeing her is to call in a morning, and to send word that somebody on business wants to speak with her."

" By farther discourse, I soon found what he said was founded on reason, and cost me what it would, I was resolved to wait till the next morning.

" He told me, that it would be in vain to try to see you early, and that my best chance would be, if I could find an hour when Lady Caroline was from home ; and he added, that she generally went out in her carriage every morning.

" Grounding my conduct on this intelligence, I took my station at the corner of a street, which leads into this place. Soon I saw Lady Caroline's coach come to the door of her house, and after its having waited nearly an hour, which I thought three, I saw it drive away with two ladies in it, neither of them, I was convinced, was you.—I knocked

at

at the door ; I inquired after you in the manner I had been directed, and it was my happy lot to be admitted to see you."

Mary was drowned in tears at the thoughts of what William had suffered, and must suffer for her sake.—She held out her hand to him.

" My dear William," said she, " how shall I repay such constancy, and such kindness?"

" Ah ! Mary," cried he, " you do not surely mean to reproach me ! what can I sacrifice, compared to that which you must give up ? if, indeed, I am the happy man you flatter me I am."

" I shall give up nothing but a life I hate," returned Mary ; " and a life I think I should hate, if there was not such a person in the world as yourself. But you will give up the comforts and affluence you enjoy, and put yourself out of the best method of making use of your own efforts, to procure them for yourself."

“Talk not so,” cried William, “if you would not have me sink under a sense of my own unworthiness; and now tell me, my beloved, what shall we resolve upon?”

“We must,” said Mary, “pursue the path that our good Mr. Ellis has so long ago marked out for us.”

“I never will be a burthen to you, or to your friends. I never will be a run-away.—I will not do that, in which I shall always glory, in a manner that will make me blush. I ought to be your wife, and I will be your wife; but I will be so in the face of the world, openly, and without disguise. You have waited until you are one and twenty, before you have thought it right to break from your father, and to begin to work for yourself. I will be twenty one before I assert my right to chuse for myself that companion with whom I am to spend my life.—I understand this is the proviso fixed by the laws of my country, as the proper ones at which children may begin to act for themselves, and I will wait that period, that my actions

actions may be as lawful as my principles are pure."

William looked on Mary with astonishment. He had never heard her speak with so much decision ; he had never heard her express herself with so much energy ; she penetrated his thoughts.

" Ah ! William," said she, " I see you are surprised ; you expected not so much resolution and thought from me ; but I have been much afflicted since I saw you ; and I have been without a single person to whom I could apply for advice.—Affliction makes us think ; and having no one on whom to rely, makes us feel our own strength.—I have reasoned all I could upon what I ought to do, and I believe I ought equally to be your wife, and to take care that I do not become so in a precipitate and unbecoming manner."

" You *ought* to be my wife ! " repeated William ; Is it only a matter of duty, then, Mary ? "

" Silly

“Silly creature!” said Mary, “would you have me tell you again and again how much I love you? and nothing but how much I love you?”

“Again, and again, a thousand times,” said William; “you cannot tell me too often; nor can you wonder that I should require repeated assurances of a blessing so much above my deserts.”

“Well, try to deserve me better, then,” said Mary, “that I may not be out of countenance for myself.”

“But,” said William, “you talk of one and twenty.—“Alas! Mary, what are we to do with the three terribly long intervening years?”

“Do with them?” returned Mary, “why they are as precious to us as gold. Is not that the period in which you are to provide me a shelter? Is not that the period in which I am to improve myself in every thing that can be useful to us in future? Shall I not have, during these three years, an opportunity of hoarding a little of all that money which

which is given me to lay out in ribbons and trinkets? Go, go, William; return into Wales; consult with Mr. Ellis; with his advice and assistance, I doubt not but you will be able to provide for me in three years time, some little cottage or other; let it, if possible, be near dear Llamamon, and then return and claim me, and you will find me ready to follow you all the world over."

William, in a transport, would have embraced her.

"I will have no nonsense," said she; "I never allowed it; and now I have nobody to take care of me, I must take double care of myself."

"But my dear Mary," said William, "it is true you point out a Heaven in prospect, but how am I to subsist in my way thither? Do you think I can live three years without any intercourse with you? Without assurances, from time to time, that you continue your kindness to me?"

"Was

"Was there ever such an infidel!" said Mary.

"Dear Mary," cried William, "you require more faith from me than—than would be sufficient to save a thousand."

"But it is faith, grounded upon works, simpleton," said she; "I only require you to believe in proportion as I do."

"And what will you do?" asked William.

"Every thing in my power," returned Mary; "and with so hearty a will as I have to oblige you, you will not find that power small."

"But here," said William, "you are watched and guarded; all your letters intercepted; surrounded with spies; without a friend near you. In such circumstances, what can you do, however kind your will may be."

Mary fixed her eyes thoughtfully on the carpet.

VI.

“I should disdain to corrupt any of the servants,” said she, “if I had the means of doing so, or thought it safe to attempt it. I am convinced I have been betrayed by that solemn looking hypocrite, who waits upon me with such profound respect.—No doubt but that she carried all the letters I gave her for the post, to my lady mamma.”

“Do you know any thing of the house maid?” said William.

“Very little,” returned Mary; “only I have thought once or twice she has pitied me, when Lady Caroline or my governess have been teasing me; and she is always very officious in offering to do any thing for me.—Why do you fix upon her?”

“She is that sister of Mr. Wynne’s servant, of whom I spoke,” said William;—“she is a Welch woman too, and I have little doubt but that she would befriend us with all her heart.”

“I hate secrets,” said Mary; “and when I do nothing of which I ought to be ashamed, why should I appear to be so?”

“Were

“Were it in your power to act openly, even at the cost of any uncomfortableness,” said William, “I would not urge you to secrecy;—but alas! you must either condescend to carry on a secret correspondence with me, or none can be between us.”

Mary ruminated—she hesitated.—At length she said, “If you can manage this matter, I consent.—But then I restrain all communication to what is essentially necessary to our interests, and to the furthering the plan we have laid.—You shall, from time to time, inform me how you prosper; and I will take care that you shall know every thing relating to me, that it is necessary you should know.”

“All you do,” said William, “it is necessary I should know.”

“No, no,” cried Mary; “that would be pleasant; but it is not necessary; we must attend to our necessities now; our pleasures are to come.—Hark! (added she) you must be gone; that is Monsieur Blanché’s knock; and besides, I expect Lady Caroline and my governess

governess back every moment.—Farewell—Farewell.”

“ Farewell, indeed !” said William, straining her to his bosom ; and God enable you to do all you promise.”

The dancing-master was announced.

“ Doubt it not,” said Mary, as she withdrew from William’s arms.—“ Be gone.”

“ *Bon jour, Monsieur,*” said she, with a slight courtsey, to the dancing-master.—“ And now, William (turning to him, and speaking in Welch) for jumping as high as Cader Idris !”

## CHAP. III.

THE variety of emotions with which this unexpected visit of William's had filled the bosom of Mary, totally incapacitated her from understanding one word that Monsieur Blanché said to her.

She stood still when she should have moved, and she moved when she should have stood still ; she jumped when she should have *chassé* ; and she *chassé* when she should have jumped.

“ Mon

“*Mon Dieu, Mademoiselle!*” cried the dancing-master.

“*Mon Dieu, indeed! Monsieur,*” said she; “the thing is quite impossible; I cannot dance this morning; and you will do me the greatest favour if you will repeat your visit another time.”

The obsequious dancing-master took his leave; but meeting Lady Caroline upon the stairs, was questioned by her how her daughter had performed that morning.—Monsieur replied with a shrug of his shoulders.

“She has been heedless?” cried Lady Caroline.

“*Point de tout,*” replied Monsieur Blanché; “*Un Garçon,* who was with Mademoiselle, seemed to have destroyed all her ideas.”

“*Un Garçon!*” repeated Lady Caroline, and rushed forward into Mary’s apartment.

“Who,” cried she, entering, “who has been with you in my absence?”

“William,” said Mary, calmly.

“ William !” repeated Lady Caroline ;—  
“ where is Boardman ? Where is Hatton ?  
This moment shall they march ; they shall  
not breathe another instant in the house :—  
And as for you——”

“ I am alone to blame,” said Mary ;—  
“ neither Mrs. Boardman or Mrs. Hatton  
have had any thing to do in the matter.”

“ Who let him in ; Who introduced  
him ?”

“ The footman let him in, and I intro-  
duced him myself.”

“ Audacious !” cried Lady Caroline,  
striking her.

“ More than this,” said Mary, walking  
deliberately out of the room, “ will I bear  
for William’s sake.”

Lady Caroline followed her with quick-  
ness ; but Madame de Mervile, just then  
coming up stairs, pushed between them, and  
entreating Lady Caroline to consider what  
she was about. Mary took shelter in her  
own room, where she eased her full and  
swelling

swelling heart, filled with a contrariety of passions, by a flood of tears.

The hurricane that Lady Caroline raised throughout the whole house, was scarcely subsided when Sir James returned from his morning's ramble, at the hour of dressing.

“Now, now,” cried Lady Caroline, when she saw him; “now is the hour of severity come surely: This farmer, this clown, this William Challoner has been here; he has been within these walls; he has been admitted to her who is a disgrace to our blood; they have been more than two hours in private together; and she has had the assurance to tell me that there is nothing she will not suffer for his sake.—What punishment is equal to such depravity?”

Sir James heard this intelligence with a very sensible chagrin.—He knew the human heart too well not to be aware that such an interview would do more towards confirming

confirming Mary in her predilection for William in an hour, than all they could do to shake his influence over her in six months.

“ How the devil,” cried he, peevishly, “ could this happen ? ”

“ By such a combination of carelessness and confidence,” said Lady Caroline, “ that it was impossible to foresee.—That blundering George, for which I have dismissed him from my service, when the fellow inquired for the wicked girl, instead of informing Boardman, told Mary herself who was here ; and she, regardless of every appearance, flew down into the hall, and introduced him herself into the drawing-room. You may imagine how I have treated her ; but it is necessary to think of some means to render such abominations impossible for the future.”

“ It is necessary,” returned Sir James, “ that I should take another tone with her to what I have hitherto held.—But still this is no time for much severity. On the contrary, we must seem to be more indulgent than

than ever. So far she has been wholly treated as a child. She has been tormented by lessons and masters from morning till night ; and she has been flattered or scolded like an infant, according as she has been diligent or careless in her exercises.

"This treatment for a girl, who thinks herself woman grown, and who has a lover to listen to her complaints, must be extremely provoking. You may remember how a similar conduct irritated yourself. We must so far give way to her, as to treat her, like what she thinks herself, a woman. Let us throw her into the world ; hitherto she has scarcely known what amusement is. Let us try to intoxicate her with pleasure, and with the flatteries of the men, that her beauty, the moment she is known, will draw round her. I cannot yet doubt but that, when she has an opportunity of comparing the qualities of her rustic favourite with those of the men of fashion, her heart will make the very election we wish it. It is impossible it should be otherways, if we do not, by

an imprudent severity, force her into such engagements, and such contracts, both with herself and her lover, as her pride afterwards will not allow her to break."

"But she is so rustic herself," cried Lady Caroline, "that I shall blush to death to introduce her into the world. I had flattered myself with the hopes of making her a little more tolerable before I brought her out."

"Your prejudices deceive you," replied Sir James; "you see no attractions but in manners similar to your own. In my eyes, and in the eyes of all who look on Mary, at least of all the men, I am sure, there is an inexpressible charm in all she does. And there does not a day pass that I am not importuned by the praises of my pretty daughter, and reproached for not letting her be more seen."

"I believe all the world but yourself, Sir James," returned Lady Caroline, "will give the preference that is due to the manners I wish to form Mary by;—but all my pains and trouble are rewarded with your usual gratitude;

gratitude ; so take your own methods with the girl, and ruin her your own way. If I might rule, she should live upon bread and water, till she had abjured this William, and given her hand to the man we chose for her."

" We have not yet chosen that man," said Sir James, warmly ; " when we have, you will find me ready to concur heartily with you in inflicting our choice. If severity is then necessary, you will see I am as free from the weakness of compassion as yourself. I will now go to her ; and according to the manner in which she receives my remonstrances, treat her with more or less harshness."

" Nothing but the greatest harshness will do," said Lady Caroline ; " and sometime, but probably too late, you will be convinced of this."

Sir James went to Mary's apartment.—  
He found her very calmly reading ; nor could he discover any traces of anger or shame on her countenance. She did not

blush when she saw him, nor seem inclined to deprecate the anger which she must be sensible she had reason to expect. She arose with her usual modesty and obligingness, and offered him her seat.

“ Sit still,” said he, “ I will take this chair.—Then, after a short pause, as if he had expected her to have spoken, are you not surprised, Mary (added he) with this visit?”

“ I cannot,” returned she, “ be quite, unconscious of its cause or its purport.”

“ And are you,” cried Sir James, “ are you not ashamed to see me?”

“ I am not aware that I ought to be so,” replied Mary.

“ What! not after all my indulgence to you? Not after the excuses I was so ready to find for your last act of imprudence? so openly, so daringly to fly in the face of the known will of Lady Caroline and myself? and so unblushingly to trespass against the modesty of your sex?”

“ To

“ To trespass against the modesty of my sex ! ” said Mary, with astonishment.

“ You know not,” continued Sir James, heedless of her exclamation, “ the feelings of a parent, and can hardly suppose, after such atrocious and accumulated offences, that tenderness and love should still be the predominant emotions in my heart towards you, nor how willing I am still to impute all that has passed to mistake, and to hope every thing I wish for the future.

“ On you, my child, depends the happiness of the remainder of my life, the happiness of Lady Caroline, and the honour of the family ; and can I suffer myself to suppose that you will throw all these valuable pledges away, with your own reputation into the bargain, merely to gratify a premature fancy of your own, which, in your riper years and judgment, you will be the first to see the folly of ? ”

Mary was silent. Although she scrupled not to avow her sentiments in the face of

Lady Caroline's rage, she felt repugnant to urging those pleas that occurred to her in her own favour, against the calm and sincere concern that seemed to actuate Sir James.

"No," continued Sir James; "I cannot suppose this. But I can readily allow for the prejudices, and the mistaken ideas of things that you have hitherto indulged in.— You may very naturally, at present, see nothing in the opposition we make to the bent of your affection, but the insatiable cravings of ambition and avarice; and you have been taught (very properly, I allow) to consider these as the irregular emotions of the heart which ought to be subdued. But this is a mistaken state of the case; humility and disinterestedness are virtues, but they are not the only virtues. We owe a due consideration to the regulated orders of the society we live in; we owe still more to the interests of the family of which we make a part; and it is our duty to take care neither to shock the one nor injure the other.—

Nothing

Nothing appears to you at this time more easy, or perhaps more just, than that Lady Caroline and myself, by allowing of your connexion with this young man, should put an end to all disputes, and render all parties happy. In twelve months time you will see that the thing was equally impossible, and wrong; that, by doing so, we should draw down upon ourselves the well-founded censure of all rightly judging people; and that, so far from promoting your happiness, and that of your lover, we should have entailed for ever on you, and your posterity, that misfortune and disgrace which ever attend such disproportionate and incongruous connexions.

“ We see *that now*, which you will see hereafter; and hence it becomes our most sacred duty, to prevent an evil which involves equally your unhappiness, and our dishonour.”

Mary’s heart fluttered; she felt an emotion, unfelt before.—Hitherto she had not entertained a doubt but that her duty and

her inclination went hand in hand. Sir James's sophistry staggered her.—It suggested to her, that she *might* be wrong; her varying colour, and tearful eye, shewed Sir James that her's was not a mind knowingly to persist in error; he saw his advantage, and thus pursued it.

“ It would be possible,” continued he, “ to prevent this evil by harsh and severe methods; but my soul abhors such thoughts. And alas! my dear child, even in seeking your happiness, I know not that I should have courage to insure it at such a rate.—I am your father, Mary, unwilling as you have always appeared, to allow of the relationship. Your unhappy father, who, from cruel necessity, having been separated from you in your infancy, return, after an absence of many years, to the mortification of finding those affections in your breast, which nature had made my due, given to others, while mine towards you are as warm and parental as if I had never parted with you from my sight.

fight. In these circumstances, it would be in vain to conjure you, by the force of love, to have compassion on me ;—you acknowledge no such power, but——”

“ Oh !” cried Mary, throwing herself upon her knees before him, “ do not say so. If I *may* love you ; if I *may* hope you will be a father to me, how much love, how much duty will you find me ready to offer you !”

“ With what transport,” cried Sir James, embracing her, “ do I now hold you to my heart ! Now, indeed, I am a father ; and now I may promise myself you will be all I wish.”

“ All I *can* be,” replied Mary, recoiling, in her mind, from what these words might be meant to imply ; “ that I will be ; nor ever, again, *my father*, shall you have reason to say I do not allow of the honoured relationship.”

“ You can do all,” returned Sir James, “ that I will require of you. Promise me that you will break off all intercourse with this young man for twelve months to come.

During that time, look around you ; and at the end of that period, decide for yourself."

" Nothing," cried Mary, rejoiced with such an opportunity for considering, at leisure, her new born scruples ; " nothing can be more reasonable.—If I do not think at the end of twelve months as I think now, I am not worthy of William, and I ought not to be his."

" And if you do," replied Sir James, " I will waive every consideration, and make him your husband."

Mary threw herself into Sir James's arms.

" My father !" cried she ; " now *indeed* you are my father."

He embraced her, but with a coldness of affection that corresponded ill with the transport which she at that moment felt towards him.

" How

“ How shall I be assured,” said Sir James, “ that you will religiously keep your promise ? ”

“ Have I not given my word ? ” returned Mary ; but you shall have an *additional*, I will not say a *better* security. I must write to William ; I must apprise him of the engagement I have entered into ; and you, my dear father, you shall see my letter.”

Such frankness, such ingenuousness, could not but convince Sir James of *her* sincerity, even while he felt abashed, by a consciousness of his own duplicity.

“ Let us see this extraordinary letter,” said Sir James.—“ This young man little thought, a few hours ago, that I should read the first letter you wrote to him.”

“ He little thought,” returned Mary, “ that I should have written to him so soon. Such a speedy intercourse was not in our plan, nor had I any certain method of conveying my letter.”

“ Let us see,” said Sir James, “ how you will address him.”

Mary wrote as follows :

“ I was to apprise you if any change  
“ took place in my situation ; a wonderful  
“ change has taken place :—It depends  
“ upon me, and me alone, whether or not  
“ we shall pass our future lives together ;—  
“ yet be not elated ; I reiterate no promise ;  
“ I repeat no vow : I have, on the contrary,  
“ engaged to suspend all intercourse with  
“ you for twelve months to come :—This  
“ period I am to pass in making myself sure  
“ of my own inclinations, and the propriety  
“ there would be in following them. At  
“ the end of that time I am to become your  
“ wife, with the consent of my parents, or  
“ to resign you for ever. Were I to tell  
“ you now—what my thoughts will be then,  
“ it would be to make that choice already,  
“ which I have promised to suspend.—This

“ I will not do ; and if this seeming hesitation appears to violate the engagements that are already between us, remember that these engagements were made when I knew not that I was accountable to any but those who allowed me to form them. Recollect, farther, that if my new situation has not cancelled any former duty, it has, at least, imposed some fresh ones. One of the least equivocal of these must be, every compliance with the will of my *real* parents, not inimical to the rights which others have in me.—Remember, too, that the reward of the sacrifice, at present required of me, is to be a free choice, in the short space of twelve months ; one third of the time I had appointed for myself.

“ When you have made these reflections, you will acknowledge there is nothing more reasonable, than that I should yield my consent to what is demanded of me, nor any thing more indulgent than the conditions annexed. I depend too firmly upon the integrity of your principles, to

“ fear that you should endeavour to make  
“ me break the engagement I have entered  
“ into, and you ought to have too strong a  
“ reliance upon mine, to fear the conse-  
“ quences of it.”

---

Sir James read the letter; he could not but be struck with the uprightness and candour with which it was marked; nor could he find any thing to disapprove, except the concluding sentence, pointing to it.

“ Is not this a promise that you will not change your mind?” said he.

“ Surely not,” returned Mary, glad to enter something farther into the subject;—“ it is only a reference to my known sentiments; to which, if I did not refer, William might suppose I had *already* changed my mind.”

“ But does it not imply,” said Sir James, “ that you cannot change it without a breach of your integrity?”

“ Affuredly

“ Assuredly it does,” replied Mary :—  
“ And oh ! my father, can any thing be  
more true than this ?”

“ What then,” cried Sir James, angrily,  
“ do you mean by your promise to me ?”

“ What that promise expresses,” said  
Mary ; “ a renunciation of all intercourse  
with William for twelve months, and an en-  
gagement that I will, during that period,  
make the best use of my reason to decide  
what choice I ought to make at the end  
of it.”

“ But you have already decided,” said  
Sir James.

“ Ah ! no,” returned Mary, “ what is  
fit and right, it is true, I believe, already to  
be decided for me ; but who shall say, that  
in a twelve month’s time I shall think that  
*right* and *just* which I think so now ? You  
tell me, my dear father, that the time will  
come when I shall be the first to see and con-  
demn the folly of my present opinions ; that  
*hereafter* I shall perceive *that* which you see  
*now*. I am willing to put this to the trial ;  
and

and if, indeed, any length of time can so corrupt my principles, my connexion with poor William would be as you say, little for his happiness, and I shall be as earnest as yourself to put an end to it."

"Do you consider on whom you reflect by all this?" said Sir James.

"I mean not to reflect on any body," returned Mary; "I thought I had had a strait path before me, but you point me out a very intricate road, to which I have no clue. You talk to me of the regulated orders of society; of the interests of my family:—Alas! they are things I do not understand. How can it be necessary to the interests of my family, that its present wealth, which gives so much more than is necessary to happiness, should be augmented by my marriage? How can it shock these regulated orders of society, whatever they may be, that I should become the wife of one of the most worthy of his sex, who is as amiable as he is excellent; who has been my companion and my friend from his childhood, and who, for

my

my sake, has sacrificed every prospect of affluence that he had in the world?"

"Was there ever such a reasoner!" said Sir James.—Pray, child, where did you learn logic?"

"I do not know," cried Mary, blushing, "what logic is.—But my kind Mr. Ellis took pains to teach me what justice and generosity were?"

"The devil take him for his pains," thought Sir James; but seeing how little prospect there was of deceiving her understanding, he thought it best to adhere to his plan of corrupting her heart, and only replied, "He gave you partial views of those sublime virtues; time will enlighten your mind on these, and many other points.—Justice and generosity are first due to the authors of your being; and it is not until you have fulfilled their claims upon you, that you can have a right to attend to the claims of others.—But no more of what I see you do not understand.—Give me your letter.—How is it to be directed?"

"Pardon

“ Pardon me,” said Mary ; “ you, my dear father, I cannot doubt ; so fairly and so kindly have you dealt by me.—But—”

“ But what ?” said Sir James.

“ I *have written* letters ;—I have *sent* letters—that—that have not been properly delivered,” said Mary.

“ You are not to wonder,” returned Sir James, “ at any effects of the lively interest Lady Caroline takes in your welfare, or of her solicitude that you should act with propriety. But to cure you of all suspicion that I have any design to suppress or alter your letter, you shall see me deliver it, sealed and directed, into Wroughton’s hands, and hear my orders for its being given to the post.”

“ Oh ! no,” said Mary ; “ is not your word sufficient ? There is the letter, my dear father ; I cannot doubt but that you will do with it as you have said.”

It was indeed Sir Jame’s full intention so to do. The letter was not exactly what he wished ;

wished ; yet he depended so little upon any change that time *alone* would work in the sentiments of Mary, that he hoped nothing more, from this suspension of intercourse between the lovers, than the gaining sufficient time for bringing to maturity his plans of seduction or coercion, as circumstances should make necessary. The letter, therefore, was sent without any alteration ; and Sir James, having once more put Mary and Lady Caroline upon an amicable footing together, Mary was, from this period, introduced to company in general, and thrown into a never-ceasing succession of amusements.

## CHAP. IV.

WHAT Sir James had foreseen soon happened. Mary scarcely appeared in the world, before she drew around her half the young men of fashion who composed its circles. Her beauty was of that kind which fascinates, rather than commands. Her large black eyes, shadowed by a length of eye-lash that obscured their lustre, cast modestly on the ground.—Her exquisitely formed Grecian figure, shrinking diffidently from observation, seemed rather to demand protection, than to court applause. But as

her

her timidity and reserve wore off by encouragement, her eyes, raised to the countenance of those who conversed with her, sparkled with intelligence, and beamed with understanding, while her modest vivacity, and arch simplicity, joined with an inexpressible charm, that was diffused over her whole person and manner, rendered her irresistibly alluring.

It happened, that the very first night in which she appeared in public, she encountered her old lover, Mr. Wynne. From an involuntary impulse, she shrunk at the sight of him, and caught hold, as if for protection of Lady Caroline's arm.

“ What is the matter, child ! ” said Lady Caroline.

Mary, recollecting herself, replied, “ Nothing, Madam ; I need not fear Mr. Wynne here.”

“ Nor any where, I hope,” said Mr. Wynne, advancing, “ will you fear him.—

Accept

Accept, I entreat you, of my contrition, and allow me the honour of your acquaintance."

The contempt Mary felt in her heart was expressed in her countenance, and she replied, "Indeed I never wished to be acquainted with you at all."

Lady Caroline, astonished and offended by the impoliteness of such words to a person of Mr. Wynne's appearance, said sternly, "Mary!" and Mr. Wynne, taking all the encouragement that was contained in the tone of her voice, and addressing her with the most profound respect, said, "I was once, Madam, so unfortunate, while unacquainted with the rank Miss Seabright was destined to adorn, as to offend her by a too lively admiration of her charms; and I allow the resentment that she seems to manifest to be just; but I should hope that my sincere penitence, and the equally ardent, but more respectful regard, which I now feel for her, may secure her pardon, and, in some degree, recommend me to your favour."

"I

“ I know nothing of all this,” said Lady Caroline ; “ but if you are a man of fashion, Sir, which I cannot doubt, my house is open to all such ; and you will not find me severe in punishing a mistake which is so handsomely atoned for.”

“ My connexions, Madam,” returned Mr. Wynne, “ are not unknown to you ;—Lord L——— will inform you who Mr. Wynne is.”

“ Mr. Wynne !” said Lady Caroline.—“ Wynne of Llantriffent ; my nephew’s intimate friend !”

“ The very same,” said Mr. Wynne gaily, “ and the ardent admirer of your charming daughter.”

“ Then pray, Mary, be friends directly,” said Lady Caroline ; “ I will have no resentment harboured for any little mistake which happened when you were in a situation where it was impossible to know what was due to you.”

“ I was never in a situation,” returned Mary, “ where the respect that modesty demands

demands was not due to me ; and I can thank Mr. Wynne very little for a respect that is shewn to my fortune rather than to myself."

" What a little rustic it is," said Lady Caroline : " But you, who know in what a strange situation I was, for so many years, obliged to leave her, and with what strange people she associated, will easily pardon those little asperities in her style and manner, and do your best, I dare say, in assisting me to polish her."

" With all the pleasure in life," returned Mr. Wynne ; " I was always desirous to polish her ; and she knows very well that I always told her, from the first, that she was not born to blossom and die unseen in the valley of Llamamon."

" Oh ! that I had never quitted it !" cried Mary, earnestly, provoked past patience, by the bold effrontery of Mr. Wynne, and the licentious indulgence given by Lady Caroline to every folly that bore the stamp of fashion."

" I

"I will have no exclamations," said Lady Caroline; "she is eternally forgetting that she is not upon the Welch mountains," added she, turning to Mr. Wynne.

"No, indeed, I am not," said Mary.—"There is nothing around me that can lead to such a forgetfulness."

Mr. Wynne laughed; and contriving to remain with Lady Caroline during the rest of the evening, he continued to tease Mary with his tailleries and his assiduities; and, by his frequent allusions to William, and the occurrences that had happened at Llamamon, sometimes covered her with blushes of resentment, and sometimes filled her eyes with tears of tender recollection.

From this time Mr. Wynne became the avowed lover of Mary; and he soon made such proposals to Sir James, as he supposed must secure him success to his wishes.—But Sir James's ambition took for his daughter a higher flight; he was resolved to ally himself,

by her means, to nobility ; and as, about the same time that Mr. Wynne fully explained himself, Sir James had also received proposals of marriage for Mary from the Earl of St. Albans, Mr. Wynne was rejected with something less ceremony than he thought due to politeness, and to a person of his consequence. He also affected to consider himself as peculiarly ill used, from the encouragement that he loudly declared he had, from the first, received from Lady Caroline : And her ill-treatment, added to the slights shewn him by Sir James, stimulated also by the contempt and aversion that Mary always manifested towards him, raised such a spirit of resentment and malevolence, in the mischief-loving, and revengeful bosom of Mr. Wynne, as awakened all his former desire of being an instrument of evil to her, and all with whom she was connected.

He cared little whether she really persevered in her partiality to William or not ; and he doubted not but that if she did, she would

readily sacrifice it to the ambitious views of her parents, and that nothing could be more mortifying, both to her and to them, than the discovery of the predilection that she had once so notoriously entertained for the young farmer. Hence he made it his business to publish, every where, all the anecdotes which had come to his knowledge, of the former life of Mary ; and scrupled not to insinuate, that he had declined a connexion with her, to which he had been courted by her parents, from suspicions the most injurious to her reputation.

Fortunately, in the certainty of success, he had made his wish and design of marrying her too public, for such a calumny to do her any material injury. It served, however, to make known her partiality for William ; a partiality which the rejection of Mr. Wynne by Sir James, and the cold indifference of Mary to him, and to every man who approached her, served to confirm ;— the one being imputed to the impossibility

that Sir James had found of ruling the inclinations of his daughter, and the other to the unconciliatory nature of a pre-engaged heart.

Notwithstanding this suspicion, Mary had many lovers.—But amongst them all, the most distinguished in rank, in fortune, and in personal qualities, was the Earl of St. Albans.

He had conceived for her one of those passions which no obstacles can deter from the pursuit of its object, and which no reluctance, or even aversion in the person beloved, can turn aside from attempts after selfish gratification.

The intoxicating beauty of Mary was a bait which his senses knew not to resist, and her large fortune a prize which his ambition longed to grasp.

From

From the first moment in which he had seen her, he had become passionately in love ; and as he thought the whole world must see with his eyes, and think with his reason, the fear of being prevented had caused him to make a much earlier application to Sir James than the strict rules of propriety could warrant. The application was, however, in itself, too acceptable to Sir James to meet with a rebuff on that or any other account. Sir James manifested the most eager acceptance of his proposals ; yet, with a crafty sincerity, he fully explained to Lord St. Albans the state of his daughter's heart, and revealed every event that had come to his knowledge of her former life.

This information might have alarmed a lover of more delicacy than Lord St. Albans ; but with him it only added one stimulus more. He persuaded himself he should now be actuated in his pursuit of Mary not only from self-love, but also from his desire to do his part towards saving so

fine a creature from destruction ; and while the affections of poor Mary's heart raised no impediment to the possession of her person and fortune, he could not but secretly congratulate himself that it was possessed by one from whom, in his interest with her parents, he could fear no competition.

" I will not pay myself so bad a compliment," said he, with no unbecoming vanity, " as to suppose I am in danger from such a rival, of final rejection from your daughter. A little, a *very* little time, I think I may be allowed to say, must shew her the difference there is between us. It is not possible, that with so just an understanding, and so true a taste as appears in all she says and does, she should persist in an attachment that must be condemned by the one, and must shock the other. I will trust myself wholly to your kindness, my dear Sir, and to my own merits, to make myself master of your daughter's heart. Do you only promise me, that no one shall be allowed to contend

contend the prize with me but this rustic ;— and although I disdain the competition, I shall have no fear of my success."

Sir James readily engaged his most active interest in a cause so near his heart, and Lord St. Albans was, from this hour, the constant attendant upon Mary in every public place, and an established inmate of her father's house.

To a disengaged heart, there were perhaps few men who would have appeared more attractive than Lord St. Albans.—He was young, handsome, polite, and insinuating : His conversation was amusing, and his temper easy. If his character was not strongly marked, neither was there any thing of imbecility in his thoughts or conduct.—He was, it is true, a man who could feel little for any one but himself ; nor was he very accurate in his ideas of rectitude, or nice in his rule of morals.—Although, when left to himself, he would not wander from

the common path of improbabilities, trodden almost universally by all young men of fashion, yet he scrupled not to *follow* others into a more licentious deviation, when no other means occurred for the gratification of his desires. His maxim seemed to be, not to suffer any “ flower of the spring to pass by him ; to fill himself with costly wine and ointment, and to crown himself with rose buds before they were withered.” In a word, he lived wholly to himself ; and from his earliest youth, having never been wanting in the power to obtain all he wished, he dreamed not of self-government, or the duty of moderation ; yet, being of a social disposition, in gratifying himself, he naturally contributed to the gratification of those with whom he associated ; and if his personal attractions recommended him to the daughters, his rank and fortune made him equally acceptable to the parents : Lord St. Albans was therefore an universal favourite ; and there was scarcely a single woman in the fashionable assemblies where he appeared, except

except the one to whom he had attached himself, who would not have thought herself peculiarly fortunate, in having attracted his attentions.—But what seemed his brightest perfection in the eyes of most, to Mary appeared his greatest blemishes.

Under the polish of politeness, she discovered the rough selfishness of the heart, and in the careless suavity of manners, she despaired the unprincipled mind. Offended, too, with the farcastic tone of aristocratic impertinence, bordering upon insolence, with which he spoke of all who moved not in the circle in which he trod, and which so strongly pointed out to her reflecting mind in what estimation she would herself have been held only a few months before, she felt, perhaps, somewhat more disapprobation than reason or taste justified, of those manners and awkward graces, which, whatever admiration they might excite in others, *she* could not consider otherways than as the mask to conceal the deformity of the mind.

What added force to her dislikes, was the very circumstance which Lord St. Albans' vanity had flattered him, would have conciliated her regard.

To listen to any one with favour who spoke of love, appeared to Mary a violation of the faith she owed to William; and when the subject was persisted in, spite of the disinclination she so evidently manifested, she considered such pertinacity as a violation of the respect that was due to herself.

As Lord St. Albans offended more in this way than any other person, so was Lord St. Albans more disagreeable to Mary than any other. Nor was she scrupulous of marking this dislike, by all the neglect and inattention to his wishes that lay in her power.

While Lord St. Albans remained astonished, and chagrined with the little progress he made in the affections of Mary, the calumnies of Mr. Wynne reached his ears.

That

That kind of courage which leads a man, either with or without a reason, to take the life of a fellow-creature, or to hazard his own, was not wanting in the composition of Lord St. Albans. He had even so much of the ancient chivalry about him, as to think it his duty to stand forth in the defence of insulted beauty in general; how much more, then, in defence of the beauty he adored?—He challenged Mr. Wynne.—They met.—Mr. Wynne received the contents of Lord St. Albans' pistol in his bosom; he dropped senseless on the ground; and Lord St. Albans went coolly to lay his laurels at the feet of Mary.

This action, which appeared to the unsophisticated mind of Mary in the light of murder, converted her simple dislike of Lord St. Albans into abhorrence, and she thought she must have lost her senses, when she heard Sir Jaimes and Lady Caroline calling upon her to testify her gratitude to her *defender*,

and found herself congratulated on the *chastisement* Lord St. Albans had bestowed upon Mr. Wynne.

She observed, however, that in her surprise and horror, she was singular; she saw Lord St. Albans unchallenged by the laws of his country; she heard it established as a rule, that, for certain offences, a *man of honour* has a right to attempt the life of his fellow man, and she was no longer to believe herself an inhabitant of the land where wilful and premeditated murder is forbidden by the religion of it, and where the laws assign death as the portion of the murderer.

It was indeed only in *wish* that Lord St. Albans was criminal to *such* an intent.

Mr. Wynne, after several weeks of severe suffering, was restored to a precarious and uneasy existence, which he hoped to prolong, by

by breathing some more salutary air than that of his native island; and for this purpose, he was no sooner able to leave his house with safety, than he quitted England, as he thought, for ever.

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## CHAP. V.

THIS incident engaged Mary's mind in reflecting on the duties of others.—She had, for some time before, been busily employed in studying her own.

The doubt that Sir James had impressed, of the rectitude of her adherence to William, had not been heard without solicitude, or passed over with indifference.

It is true, that Mary was very sincerely in love; but she had, from her infancy, been so accustomed

accustomed to connect the ideas of happiness and virtue, that it was not the influence of any passion that could enable her to separate them.—She felt that self-approving heart was as essential to her felicity as even the possession of the man she loved ; and she knew, to conviction, that she could neither give nor receive happiness but through the medium of virtue.—Was it then a duty to abandon William, and submit herself to the will of her parents ? It was a fearful question, and Mary, with a palpitating heart, set herself to examine it. Too young for a casuist, unschooled and unlettered, she busied herself not with nice distinctions or subtle questions. The manifest injustice she should commit towards William, in reclaiming a heart so freely given, and so repeatedly pledged, furnished her with an irrefragable argument, the most flattering to her wishes ; while the absurdity of submitting to *any* other, the choice of the person to whom she was to be bound by the most sacred of obligations,

obligations, and to whom she would be accountable for the most arduous of duties, appeared so glaringly evident, that she was struck with conviction of her right to decide for herself. This right appeared paramount to all others ; and so far she could reason logically as to discover, that a duty, which her parents had no right to exact, she could be under no obligation to pay. Thus her mind became easy, as to the justice of her determination never to give up William.— Much of her *own happiness* she was bound to sacrifice to the kindness of her parents, might have been another consideration, had it not been superseded by the reflection, that she had no right to resign any part of William's, and that she could not break her engagements with him, without making him miserable. Here, then, she fixed, to preserve her faith to her lover inviolate, but to soften her opposition to the will of her parents, by every affectionate attention, and every dutiful compliance in her power.—The justness of her reasoning, she thought, was allowed

allowed by the promise Sir James had given, that, if she continued in her present sentiments for twelve months, he would, at the end of that period, consent to her union with William.

Satisfied, then, with herself, and relying upon the integrity of Sir James, Mary gave up her mind to the most delightful visions of promised happiness. For some time, she entertained not a doubt of the good will and indulgence which he had so largely professed. His bland and easy manners gained both her confidence and her love; and being every day more and more convinced that no affection could ever subsist between her and Lady Caroline, she sought an indemnification for so heavy a misfortune, by cultivating and indulging the fondest affection towards her father. The delusion, however, lasted not long. With those she loved, Mary was as open as day-light.—She dreamt not of disguise; and perpetually repulsed by the severity and ill humour of Lady Caroline, she hung

hung fondly on Sir James, as being the only person to whom she could communicate her thoughts. Soon, however, she discovered that his was no kindred mind. As she played fondly round him, he would, according to the humour of the moment, sometimes repulse, and sometimes neglect her. As it was difficult to him always to be on his guard, he would also sometimes treat her opinions and manner of thinking with contempt. Sometimes he would ridicule the rusticity of her notions, and sometimes he would harshly condemn them.

Mary, on these occasions, would shrink back into herself, and longed to wing her way to Llamamon, where alone she thought she could find minds similar to her own.— Added to this, when Sir James beheld the aversion Mary manifested towards Lord St. Albans, he not unfrequently lost patience, and treated her with a tone of authority which gave her a glimpse into his real intention.

All.

All her former suspicion recurred ;—the overheard conversation was recalled to her mind ; she thought she saw the whole of Sir James's paraded kindness to her but as parts of that original scheme, and she relapsed into distrust and coldness.

So far from her seeing any probability that she should, at the end of her year of trial, find the indulgence she had been taught to expect, she had every reason, since the introduction of Lord St. Albans into the family, to believe that a choice was already made for her ; and she every day learnt, by accidental conversation, as well as by express admonition, how monstrous, and even impossible, the connexion was esteemed, which she wished to form. The designs of Sir James and Lady Caroline became every hour more plain ; and the veil, which seemed still designed to cover them, was become too transparent not to be seen through. Mary was at length fully convinced that she had been duped.

Shocked ?

Shocked and offended by the duplicity with which she had been treated, she lost, at the same moment, all remains of affection for Sir James, and all confidence in what he said.

Reasoning from particulars to generals, she saw nothing in the manners of those by whom she was surrounded but the same specious kindness, and the same real hard heartedness, by which she had been deceived by Sir James.

Disgusted by an affectation of compliance, which her experience had taught her to consider as the cloak of selfishness, her mind revolted from the artificial manners, and the studied graces of those who seemed to consider themselves as the first of human beings. Offended by the distinction that they arrogated to themselves, and recollecting how widely they differed from all that she had been taught to consider as the exemplars of what is good and amiable in the human mind,

mind, she became not more enamoured of the life and society she had left, from the preference that she gave to its simple and innocent pleasures, than from the positive disapprobation and ardent dislike that she felt to the licentious principles and expressive amazements that marked the mind and taste of those with whom she now associated.

She had been taught to consider an avarice of time as the key stone of every virtue, the instrument by which every duty was to be performed. Here she saw the most lavish waste of moments that would return no more, and saw hours and days shamefully misused, which were to be reckoned for in the strict account to which she had been accustomed to believe every one would sometime be called. She was herself compelled to take her share in an idleness that her heart thus warmly condemned ; and since her lessons had been suspended, there was scarcely an hour in any one day on which she could look back with satisfaction, much less with applause.

applause. In associating with those of her own age, the gaiety natural to her disposition, and her time of life, led her to partake, with fervour, of the amusements that were offered to her, but she was shocked with the lightness of their principles, and wearied with the vacuity of their conversation. Unaccustomed to the details of dress and gallantry, she had no relish for such topics; and she found, with amazement, that the young talked of nothing else. In the scandal of the day, she was still less interested; and while it opened scenes which served to confirm her in her aversion to the way of life to which her parents wished to devote her, it justified, in her opinion, the resolution she had taken, never to submit to such a degradation of existence. When she looked around her, and listened to the opinions she heard, and reflected on the actions to which she was witness, she could scarcely persuade herself she was in a society of Christians; and since the adventure of Lord St. Albans with Mr. Wynne, she hesitated not to pronounce that

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she was not. Every rule which she had been taught to consider as sacred, was violated ; every principle that she considered as incontrovertible, was disputed. She was often covered with confusion, by the conversation she heard from the mouths of women to whom every body seemed to look up ;— and she was often struck dumb with astonishment, on finding connexions avowed, the bare suspicion of which, she had supposed, must overwhelm the parties concerned with shame. She heard much in the praise of humanity and benevolence ; but she saw the most criminal inattention, both to the souls and bodies of the dependants of those who made these harangues, and the most lavish misuse of those fortunes which could alone relieve the wants that appeared to be so feelingly deplored.

“ No, never, never,” said Mary, “ will I so waste my time, my faculties, and my property.”

Thus

Thus ill had succeeded Sir James's plan to corrupt the heart, and to falsify the taste, of Mary. All she saw and heard served but to confirm her in the affections and the choice of her earliest years ; and it was by having become intimately acquainted with the splendid nothingness and vicious idleness of the great world, that she was led, both by the election of her heart, and the conviction of her reason, unalterably to decide in preference of the virtuous and rational delights of a life spent in useful occupations, and healthful industry.

“ William,” said she, “ shall not be idle, even if my father should make us rich. If he work not for himself, he shall work for others. Every hour in each day shall have its occupation. I should die with grief, were I to see him imitate those arrogant men of fashion, who think themselves so much above him.”

“ We

“We are estimable,” would she sometimes think, “only in proportion as we are useful. What esteem is there due to those who live wholly to themselves, and who benefit others but by chance, and because they cannot otherways supply sufficient means for their own gratifications?”

## CHAP. VI.

WITH those sentiments, which every day's observation strengthened in the mind of Mary, it is not to be wondered at if Lord St. Albans made no progress in her heart.— Every day she testified more contempt and dislike of him: Sir James found his calculations false, and Lord St. Albans beheld his vanity confounded. It was evident to both, that to proceed in the path they were in, was but to stray farther from their point; yet could not Sir James resolve to give up the Earl as his son-in-law; nor could Lord St.

St. Albans consent to resign Mary. Lady Caroline urged vehemently, and Sir James consented to try its effect.

He told Mary to consider Lord St. Albans as her future husband, and threatened her with the harshest consequences of his displeasure, should she venture to reject him. Mary pleaded the promise that had been made her, and found herself treated with ridicule for having relied upon an engagement that it was asserted it was impossible to fulfil,

“ By such an expedient,” said Sir James, “ I gave you an opportunity of arrogating to yourself all the merit of a change in your sentiments, and of a return to propriety.— You had it in your power to convince the whole world, even more than Lord St. Albans’s successful sword had done, that the reproaches of Mr. Wynne proceeded alone from his malice; and you owed such advantages to my indulgence and good management; but, by your conduct to Lord

St. Albans, you daily confirm the stigma that unworthy man endeavoured to fix upon your name. It hence becomes my duty to take care, by announcing to the world that you are destined to become the wife of Lord St. Albans, to wipe off this reproach, and to convince the most incredulous that you are thought worthy of the rank to which you were born."

Mary heard this declaration with more indignation than surprise.

"It is evident," said she, "that I have been deluded:—"But be assured, Sir, that neither calumny nor murder are the ways to subdue my resolution.—My future life shall be the vindication of that which is past;—and the faith with which I will keep my obligations to William, a proof that I am incapable of breaking those which I owe to myself."

"Yet," said Sir James, scornfully, "you will be the wife of Lord St. Albans."

"Never!"

"Never!" replied Mary, firmly; "but I beseech you, oh! my father, not to compel me into a sturdiness of opposition ill suited to the character of a daughter."

"Obedience, unqualified obedience," said Sir James, "is the duty of a daughter, and it is that which I exact from you."

This declaration called for some consideration on the part of Mary. It seemed to absolve her from the promise she had made, to break off all intercourse with William, since it revoked the condition upon which alone she had given it. Was it then necessary that she should take any step in consequence of being thus at liberty? After all the reflection she could make, she resolved in the negative. She found herself in no other situation than that in which she had declared her resolution to William not to become his wife until she was twenty-one, and she determined to adhere to this resolution.

Notwithstanding Sir James's threats, she feared little from any force that might be attempted to be put upon her inclination, and still less from any controul upon her actions. She thought it impossible that she should be married to Lord St. Albans against her will, and doubted not the strength of her constancy. Thus confirming herself in her attachment to William, and endeavouring to snatch every advantage, in point of instruction, that her present situation afforded her, Mary resumed that calm tenor of mind, and patient waiting-for of better days, from which the false and insidious professions of indulgence and love, so lavishly made use of by Sir James, had aroused her only a few weeks before.

In the mean time, her attachment to William was become publicly and generally known ; and as she considered herself as no longer under any probation, she did not, when challenged on the subject by her young companions, disavow it. Thus her love for  
the

the young peasant made the discourse of every society to which she was known; but she was herself unconscious of the degree of censure she incurred, the wonder she excited, and the conclusions that were drawn, as to her principles and character, from an attachment, that, in the eyes of the great and polite world, appeared so monstrous and unnatural.

Mothers considered Lady Caroline as the object of the most sincere compassion, protesting, that were they in her place, they should not know where to hide their heads for very shame. “ They could forgive an imprudent passion, where there was only disparity of fortune, but disparity of rank! for such an enormity there could be no pardon.” Some more charitable desired it might be remembered, that when the attachment began, there was no such disparity known to subsist; that manners, habits, and education, were the same: The commencement of the affection was therefore excusable;—

but the continuance of it ! What charity could find an apology for such a dereliction of all grandeur of sentiment ?

There were, however, general criticisms, and they were made by those who had no self-interest in the good or ill conduct of Mary ; but there was one individual of her acquaintance who not only heard her story with indulgence, but also flattered herself she might be able to reap some personal advantage from her supposed principles. This was Lady Harriet Fortescue, the thirteenth child of the Earl of B——.

Lady Harriet was good humoured, lively, and indiscreet. There subsisted between Lady B—— and Lady Caroline a close intimacy, and the young ladies had become extremely intimate, from the first of Mary's appearance in the great world.

Lady Harriet had spent a part of the preceding summer at Brighton, and had there formed

formed an attachment to a younger son of a gentleman, who, like Lord B——, had a numerous family, and no very large income.

The young man was destined for the profession of the law; but having, from his nursery, been accustomed only to scenes of dissipation and indulgence, he was almost as incapable of the application, and perseverance necessary even to a tolerable success in his profession, as he was disinclined to them.

He had, however, talents much more attractive in the eyes of Lady Harriet.—He sung well, danced to admiration, and understood the science of small talk better than any of his contemporaries. Lady Harriet had beauty, and he felt its power.—Lady Harriet had vanity, and was pleased with her conquest. They mutually believed themselves in love, and they soon found, that even a passion, visionary as theirs, was not without its sorrows.

The fathers and mothers, on both sides, declared their union impossible, and the young gentleman was ordered to attend to his chambers, and the young lady to her masters. But it is easier to command than to obey; and Lady Harriet and her lover were neither of them inclined to give themselves much trouble. They therefore continued to subsist on fide glances, private *billet-doux*, and sometimes stolen interviews.— Sometimes they talked of waiting for more favourable times, and sometimes they resolved not to waste their lives in fruitless expectation, while there was a chaise and four to be had in the metropolis, and a charitable blacksmith to be found at Gretna Green.

But Lady Harriet was at the bottom a coward. It is true she liked Mr. Wilmot better than any of the other men who flattered her; but she liked the ease and splendor of life still better than she liked Mr. Wilmot. The eclat, however, of an elopement, with

with the honour resulting from a noble disdain, of all pecuniary considerations, had their charms for her, and she wanted but a little encouragement to induce her to take a step, which, had she taken, she would have repented every hour of her life afterwards.

This encouragement she expected to receive from Mary, and therefore cultivated her friendship with the greatest affiduity.

“ I am engaged every day in your defence, my dear Mary,” said she one day to her, as they were alone together ; “ the world is so stupidly avaricious, that there is not to be found one person in a hundred who can conceive the merit and pleasure of sacrificing all for love.”

“ I am obliged to you for your kindness,” returned Mary ; “ but I do not know what part of my conduct wants a defence.”

“ Not with me, my dear,” said Lady Harriet ; “ I adore your spirit ; though I must acknowledge I should have more to say

in your favour, if your swain were a gentleman."

" Does all this refer to my affection for William ?" asked Mary, gravely.

" To what else can it refer, my dear ?" replied Lady Harriet ; " you must be sensible that your passion for a farmer's son is a little out of rule for a person of your birth and fortune ; but to be sure you have a right to chuse for yourself, as we all have ; and I suppose he is divinely handsome.—I would give the world to see him."

" He would probably disappoint your expectations," said Mary, coolly, and piqued. " But pray what is there out of rule, as you call it, in my attachment to a person who was once as much my superior in fortune, as he will always be my equal, *at least* in every valuable quality of the heart and understanding."

" Lord, my dear," returned Lady Harriet, " is he not a farmer's son ? a person whom nobody knows ? And are not you the grand-daughter of an Earl ? and allied to some

some of the first families in the kingdom, and may have a hundred thousand pounds for your fortune, for any thing I know?— Such a thing was never heard of. It is a little preposterous, to be sure. If he had been a gentleman, indeed—a person of any education——.”

“ His education was more than equal to mine,” said Mary ; “ and if being a gentleman means a person of gentle manners, one who never willingly gives offence, and who studiously does all he can to oblige and please ; who is never at ease himself, while he sees others in pain ; and who thinks nothing burthensome which can contribute to their relief ; if this is to be a gentleman, William is as much a gentleman as any man in the kingdom : But if it mean, as the examples I see every day lead me to believe, one who makes no scruple of stareing modesty out of countenance, who loiters about inattentive to the wants and wishes of those about him ; who sacrifices the conveniences of others to his own whims, and who seems to

to dread the exertion of raising a chair from the ground, or the labour of ringing a bell ; then I confess William is no gentleman ;— and I am heartily glad he is not."

" To be sure," said Lady Harriet, " the men are insufferably idle ; but how oddly you talk ! One should think you did not know what a gentleman is."

" Indeed I do not," said Mary.

" Lord bless me !" cried Lady Harriet ; " why a gentleman—a gentleman is a person descended from an ancient family, to be sure."

" An ancient family ?" said Mary ; " I thought all families were *equally* ancient."

" I never heard the like," said Lady Harriet : " A gentleman is one who knows who his ancestors have been hundreds and hundreds of years."

" And is it the same with a gentlewoman ?" asked Mary.

" To be sure," returned Lady Harriet.

" Then when I lived at dear Llamamon," said Mary, " and thought myself the daughter

daughter of Richard and Eleanor, I was no gentlewoman?"

" Dear, yes, you were," said Lady Harriet; " just the same; only you did not know it."

" I thought you said," replied Mary, " that being a gentlewoman consisted in *knowing* who our ancestors had been for hundreds and hundreds of years."

" Bless me, there's no talking to you," said Lady Harriet; " I know what I mean. A gentleman is——is——is a gentleman."

" So I believe," returned Mary; " and William is William; " and hitherto you have not brought any very convincing argument, that there is any thing very preposterous in loving him."

" *I*, my dear?" cried Lady Harriet.— " Oh! no, I am quite of your mind; only I can't help wishing him a gentleman, that the thing might not be quite so odd; but I assure you I think you quite right; and to tell you the truth, I believe I shall follow your example."

“Indeed!” said Mary; “have you then a William in a corner?”

“No, not a William,” said Lady Harriet; “my friend is a gentleman, and I am come to ask your advice, for I am sure you will be of my opinion.”

“Are you quite sure of that?” asked Mary.

“How can it be otherways?” said Lady Harriet.—“You are resolved to marry William in spite of all that your friends and relations can say to the contrary; and will not you advise me to marry Mr. Wilmot, let mine do what they will to prevent it?”

“Why should they prevent you?” said Mary.

“Oh! the old story,” returned Lady Harriet; “because dear Wilmot is poor, and you know Lord B—— is not rich, and we are thirteen brothers and sisters, and so they say we shall starve if we marry.—But I don’t mind starving—Do you?”

“Indeed I do,” said Mary.

“Why;

"Why; do you think Sir James will give you any thing, if you marry William?" said Lady Harriet."

"Not a sixpence," returned Mary.

"Then you must starve," replied Lady Harriet.

"That does not follow," replied Mary; "William knows how to manage a farm, and I can spin, and understand a dairy."

"Well, I dare say I could spin," said Lady Harriet; "for you know it is very fashionable.—And as to a dairy, it is quite my delight.—You can't think what a beautiful one mamma has in the country: But then I am afraid Mr. Wilmot knows nothing about farming; but he might soon learn; for all gentlemen are farmers now a days."

"And you can rise with the sun," said Mary; "make your own butter and cheese; breakfast upon boiled milk; dine upon beans and bacon; and go to bed by day-light?"

"Bless me, no!" said Lady Harriet;—"how can you talk of such horrid things?"

"Because

"Because they are the things I must do, when I marry William," said Mary, "and what you must do, if you persuade Mr. Wilmot to turn farmer."

"There can be no occasion," said Lady Harriet; "I am sure I know a great many ladies that have dairies, and do nothing at all like it."

"And those ladies keep themselves and their families from the profits of their dairies?" said Mary.

"No, they have estates besides," returned Lady Harriet; "but I always hear them say that their dairies answer, and are very profitable."

"But I take it," replied Mary, "that you and I shall have no estates; and that, if we keep our dairies as those ladies do, we shall run the chance of starving, which you seem to think a very pleasant expectation."

"No, indeed, that's not it," said Lady Harriet; "but to tell you the truth, I don't suppose that either papa or old Mr.

Wilmot

Wilmot will let us starve ; and when we are once married, they must support us."

" And who is to support your brothers and sisters," said Mary, " if they all follow your example ? Or would you have Lord B——— take from his dutiful children, and give to those who are undutiful ?"

" Well," said Lady Harriet, " who would have thought this ? You preach obedience, Mary !"

" I preach honesty," said Mary ; " and if I were to say I give an example of it in my conduct towards William, I think I should not say more than is true. I have heard you say, Lady Harriet, that Lord B——— can only give you five thousand pounds. Mr. Wilmot, you say, is poor.— Can you live upon his poverty, and your five thousand pounds ?"

" Why *you*," said Lady Harriet, " talk of living with William, and won't have any thing like it."

" But I can work hard, and live hard," said Mary ; " neither of which can you."

" No,"

"No," returned Lady Harriet; "I was not born to it."

"Then," said Mary, "you are not independent enough to have a right to please yourself.—You were not born to work, you say, it is true; you were born——forgive me, my dear Harriet, a poor gentlewoman;—a most useless, helpless being. Nay, you were born something worse, in as much as you were born to a title, which is one shackle the more upon your natural abilities. If you had been born poor in a cottage, you would have known how to have got your own living; but being born poor in a castle, you must depend upon the charity of others."

"Depend upon charity, Mary!" said Lady Harriet;—"what do you mean by that?"

"Did you not say just now," returned Mary, "that if you married Mr. Wilmot, Lord B—— and old Mr. Wilmot would be obliged to support you? I can marry William,

William, and be obliged to nobody but myself for my support."

"I am sure," said Lady Harriet, "I have always been told that high birth is a great advantage, and that, with the addition of a good education, it would supply the place of fortune."

"A good education," returned Mary, "will indeed supply the place of fortune, and make the accident of birth insignificant. But that education is good which fits us best for our stations in life. You have been educated for a fine lady, and will find yourself terribly at a loss where fine lady qualifications are of no use."

"Dear, you mistake the matter quite," said Lady Harriet.—"You are not to suppose that I have not been taught economy. I can make up all my own millinery; and I know how to ornament a house at a trifle of expence."

"What will these talents avail you," said Mary, "when you have no millinery to make up,

up, and no house that will admit of ornament?"

"But if I marry Mr. Wilmot," said Lady Harriet, "after papa has forgiven us, we shall have a house; and without injuring my brothers and sisters, I dare say he can get Mr. Wilmot a place where there is nothing to do; for you know we are all on the right side, and then all will be very well."

"And so," cried Mary, "William and I are to work harder and harder to pay the taxes that are to furnish a place for you and Mr. Wilmot, where there is nothing to do! and yet you suppose you do not depend upon the charity of others! But surely you do, and upon their industry too."

"Nay, Mary," returned Lady Harriet, "if you talk politics, I have done. I wonder where you get all these strange never before heard of notions."

"By making use of my eyes, ears, and understanding," replied Mary, "and by listening to the wisdom of my dear Mr. Ellis."

"Then,

“ Then, after all,” said Lady Harriet, “ you would not advise me to marry Mr. Wilmot ?”

“ Not,” said Mary, “ except you can live upon his profession, and your five thousand pounds, without encroaching upon the rights of your brothers and sisters, or making William and me contribute to keep you.”

“ You put things together very strangely,” said Lady Harriet ; “ but to be sure we could never live upon so little.—Why, I spend more than half such an income in my drefs ; and I am sure I am very economical too. But I begin to think it will be best to break off in time ; for I should hate the thoughts of being unjust ; nor could I bear to be so very poor.—And besides, Mr. Wilmot would not like it himself ; and then, perhaps, we might quarrel ; so I am resolved I will give him his *congé*.—But who would have thought that *you* would have converted me ?”

Some

Some few days after this conversation, Lady Harriet received proposals of marriage from a young nobleman of large fortune.— She accepted the offer with great pleasure, and told every body that it was owing to Miss Seabright that she did not run away with Mr. Wilmot, and that she was the happiest woman in the world with Lord Delville.

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## CHAP. VII

WHILE Mary's advice to Lady Harriot, opposed to her own conduct, drew upon her, from most people, the charge of inconsistency, it procured for her the consideration of a person, whom she had long regarded with respect and admiration; and it served to draw still tighter the bonds of friendship, which were already formed between her and a young lady about her own age.

Although, as most of Lady Caroline's connexions, and all her favourite lines of intimacy

intimacy lay amongst people of the first rank and fashion, Mary had drawn her observations upon life and manners mostly from that polluted source, yet, as it *unhappily* happens in England, that all degrees and ranks edge so closely on each other, as sometimes to intermingle, Lady Caroline herself, with all her aristocratic prejudices, and all her arrogant pretensions to exclusive consequence, was sometimes compelled to appear in societies which she considered as of a lower order, however distinguished by their virtue, their sense, and the urbanity and politeness of their manners.

Still farther, to mortify her pride, she could not conceal, either from herself or the world, that some of those who partook of her own blood made a part of these societies ;— nor could she precisely mark the line in her family, where it flowed pure, and where it was mingled with a more ignoble stream.— She generally, however, confined to her own personal visits to such streets and squares as

we

we have marked with the stamp of  *fashion* ;— or if she deviated from this rule, it was in favour of those few of the nobility, who, having had fixed residences before this stamp was established, gave sufficient dignity to plebeian stations to intitle them to her notice. As to the rest of those, to whom, perhaps, her civilities were much more due, she declared she believed them “ the best people in the world ; but that really they lived at so unconscionable a distance, and in such strange out of the way places, that she had neither time to visit them, nor courage to encounter the obstacles that lay in her way.”

There was, however, one exception to this maxim, that, in spite of herself, she was obliged to make.

A relation of her mother's had been bred to the law.—He was at once the ornament of his profession, and of human nature. He had married a woman distinguished alike for her understanding, her excellence, and the

agreeableness of her talents. Her birth and connexions were such, as even the pride of Lady Caroline was obliged to respect. She united in her favour the suffrage of people of the first fashion, of the most exalted understandings, and of the most scrupulous morals.

Many boasted of her acquaintance, who were scarcely intitled to courtsey to her in public; and all who possessed it considered it as the source of some of their best pleasures. There were distinctions that Lady Caroline could not deny; for they were sanctioned equally by the voice of fashion and of truth. What then could make it difficult or irksome to Lady Caroline to visit Mrs. Elliot?—Mrs. Elliot lived in Bloomsbury.

This weighty impediment to Lady Caroline's appearing at her house, would probably never have been gotten over, had not she been drawn thither by a motive much more powerful than any relish which she had for a

society, which was in fact too good to be her taste. This motive was not the fear of *being* ungrateful, but of being *stigmatized* with ingratitude.

Mrs. Elliot was a person too well known, and of too much *real* consequence to be *ungratefully* neglected without drawing opprobrium on the person who neglected her;— and Lady Caroline's obligations to her had been too public to give her reason to hope she should escape censure, were she to fail in every attention to her benefactor now in her power.

Mrs. Elliot alone, of all Lady Caroline's connexions, had been assistant to her in her distress previous to her voyage to India, and she had been the means of reconciling her to her family on her return. The one obligation was too notorious, and the other too recent, to suffer Lady Caroline, with impunity, to appear forgetful of either. She had

therefore talked ostentatiously of her gratitude, and the *eternal* remembrance she should retain of the favours done her. For these reasons, Mary had been introduced at Mrs. Elliot's on her arrival in town; and from the first, she had found the society she had there met with peculiarly attractive. It was indeed a society that charmed all ages.—Dullness, that fiend, who, with hovering wings, so frequently damps all attempts towards gaiety, even in the most brilliant assemblies, never found its entrance within Mrs. Elliot's walls.—Unincumbered by the trappings of vanity, uncontaminated by the alloy of vice, pleasure here appeared in its genuine form, and native purity. Ease and gaiety were its handmaids, and reflection, free from self-reproach, its follower. It was here that conversation asserted its rightful claims, and became, what it was meant to be, the first delight of rational creatures.—People, accustomed to be hurried by the tyranny of habit, from one place of amusement to another, were astonished to behold Mrs. Elliot,

Elliot, without effort, possess, and communicate that pleasure which they, with so fruitless a labour, were perpetually seeking, but could never find. The question was continually asked, "How can you find the means to detain so many agreeable people around you?" And the observation continually made, "Nobody has such good society as Mrs. Elliot."—"Nobody but Mrs. Elliot can live with those they like."

Mrs. Elliot would often reply, "You might all do as much, if you would; but if it is necessary to you to be at ten different places in a night, you cannot expect to enjoy yourselves in any. My whole secret consists in knowing when I am well."

No where did Mary dance with half so much delight, as at Mrs. Elliot's: No where did she listen to conversation (and sometimes as diffidently take a part in it) with so much relish and improvement as there. With Mrs. Elliot herself, she was inexpressibly

charmed. She seemed to her the prototype of all she could herself wish to be: Yet she felt so sensibly the distance which Mrs. Elliot's talents and merit put between them, that perhaps she, of all those to whom Mary had been introduced, was the one with whom she had least familiarized herself. Mrs. Elliot's temper, although more than commonly kind, was not of that facile sort which bestows indulgence alike on all. Merit or talents were necessary to engage her admiration, or secure her love. Tolerant to all, she yet suffered not the insolent or careless to pass unrepressed or unadmonished.—Hence those who frequented her society found it necessary to regulate their manners by the dictates of good taste, and the restraints of propriety. Mary saw that she could not hope for the favour of Mrs. Elliot without deserving it; and diffident of herself, she mistrusted her own powers as to making so desirable an acquisition.

Mrs.

Mrs. Elliot neither liked nor approved Lady Caroline; and the story of Mary's pertinacious attachment to William having reached her ears, with circumstances very disadvantageous to Mary, Mrs. Elliot made no advances that could encourage her to more openness. She thought she observed in Mrs. Elliot less kindness to her than to the other young people who assembled at her house; and the idea that she was disapproved by a person of whom she had so high an opinion, seemed to her as a condemnation, and lessened her courage in laying claim to her attentions.

Mary's beauty, and the sweetness of her manners, had, notwithstanding, made her very conspicuous in Mrs. Elliot's assemblies. Mr. Elliot, who was accustomed to talk much to the younger part of the society, soon discovered the uncommon excellence of her understanding, and encouraged an intimacy between her and a niece of his own, who was at present with Mrs. Elliot.

Anna united the kindest heart, and the best disposition it was possible for a human creature to possess ; but she had slow parts, and much indolence of mind. Mr. Elliot hoped, that the superior genius, and active energy of Mary, might excite Anna to greater exertion ; and Anna, enamoured of talents, which, though she despised to rival, she was incapable of envying, became sincerely and warmly attached to Mary. Mary, on her part, found in Anna a virtue so genuine, and a kindness so sincere, that she soon preferred her company to that of every other young person with whom she was acquainted, and conceived for her the most sincere affection. But the two friends had to combat with the prepossessions of Mrs. Elliot, all in disfavour of poor Mary ; and as Anna was not formed to be a very powerful advocate, she was, for some time, able to make but small progress in her own opinion.

It happened that Anna was well known to Lady Harriet Fortescue, and to her she had

detailed

detailed the conversation she had had with Mary, and the consequences of that conversation to herself. Anna had repeated all this to Mrs. Elliot, and she had found something so unusual, considering Mary's situation, and her supposed partiality to William, in the turn of thought displayed in this conversation, that she had been led, from that time, to converse more freely with her.

It was impossible to do so without discovering the excellence of her principles, and the soundness of her understanding. Joined to these, there was in Mary a gaiety of disposition, and a talent for amusement, always peculiarly agreeable to Mrs. Elliot, wherever she found them. Every important objection to Mary's character being done away in Mrs. Elliot's opinion, she became almost fascinated by the natural graces of her conversation and manners; while Mary, from the indulgence with which she was now treated, finding all fear and reserve dissipated, availed herself of the advantages resulting from a free

intercourse with so distinguished a person as Mrs. Elliot, and found the good arising from it incalculable.

One of the most valuable of Mrs. Elliot's talents was the address, with which she united the most perfect frankness, with the tenderest respect for the feelings of others. No one, who conversed with her, could be ignorant of her real sentiments; but no one could be offended by her manner of discovering them. To the young, with whom she was intimate, she never omitted intimating the failings she observed in their conduct, but in such a way as to excite apprehension only in those who wished not to be corrected. Mary, who loved instruction, and panted after perfection, knew how to take lessons even from the turn of Mrs. Elliot's eye:—Hence she formed herself from her example, and emulated her virtues; and thus scarcely a day passed that she did not add something to her own.

The

The partiality that Mary expressed for Mrs. Elliot, and the society she met with at her house, was highly displeasing to Lady Caroline.

“ In every thing,” cried she, “ you discover the meanness of your taste. Mrs. Elliot, it is true, is a very respectable person; but with whom does she chiefly associate? A parcel of vulgar lawyers and their wives; people whom one sees no where else.”

“ True,” returned Mary, with humility in her tone, but satire in her heart, “ they *are* a sort of people whom we see no where else.”

“ I recommended Lady Seymour to your notice and imitation,” said Lady Caroline; “ since you must pretend to understand good conversation, where will you find it in such perfection as at her house, and at her suppers?”

“ It is a conversation,” replied Mary, “ to which I am not equal.”

“ Pray

"Pray what do you mean to object to?" said Lady Caroline, "with your mock modesty."

"Why should I make you angry?" said Mary.—"But wouldest thou *indeed* wish me to imitate Lady Seymour's manners and conversation?"

"There's another blessed effect of your vulgar prejudices," said Lady Caroline;—"I understand your insinuation.—You good people are so mightily censorious.—Pray, Mrs. Nicety, to what do you object in Lady Seymour's manners and conversation?"

"In her manners," said Mary, warmly, "her avowed connexion with Mr. Stanhope.—In her conversation, an indelicacy that covers me with confusion."

"Oh! you are prodigiously understanding," said Lady Caroline; "and what impropriety does your superior wisdom see in what you are pleased to call her connexion with Mr. Stanhope? Is he not the friend of Lord Seymour? Is not Lord Seymour admitted to all Lady Seymour's parties. If

he

he sees nothing to disapprove in her conduct, does it become you, child, to be her censor?"

"No, indeed," said Mary, modestly, "it does *not* become me; nor do I mean to be so; but I cannot be inattentive to what I see; I cannot be insensible to the observation I have heard made a hundred times, that the ease with which Lord Seymour seems to view his wife's behaviour, only shews that the depravity has a wider range."

"That's one of your Bloomsbury observations," cried Lady Caroline; "I must put an end to your visitings there."

"Pardon me," said Mary; "it is the observation of those who are not perhaps intitled to throw the first stone, even at Lady Seymour.—In Bloomsbury they talk of things, not persons, Madam."

"Are you really so stupid," cried Lady Caroline, "as to find no amusement in the conversation you hear at Lady Seymour's."

"I do not say so," returned Mary: "On the contrary, I often find it highly amusing.

But that must be when I can listen to it, which is indeed far from being the case at all times."

"And then," said Lady Caroline, "I see you gazing at the pictures as if you had forgotten that there was any body in the room, or counting the sticks of your fan, like an idiot."

"And happy am I if, by such expedients," cried Mary, "I can escape from being made a party in a dialogue, that I really think it would become no young woman to join in."

Lady Caroline gave Mary a look of ineffable contempt, and bade her prepare to sup that evening at Lady Seymour's.

## CHAP. VIII.

WHILE the events and observations of every day were strengthening Mary in her predilection for a life of honest industry, and rational amusement, in preference to the splendid frivolousness and licentious indulgences of high bred idleness, she remained wholly ignorant of the sentiments and occupations of William. She had hitherto received no reply to the letter she had written to him ; and she considered his silence as an acquiescence in the resolution she had announced to him.—She could not wish this otherways ;

otherways ; but importuned and wearied as she was daily by the assiduities of Lord St. Albans, and the life she was compelled to lead, she found this total interruption of intercourse with all whom her heart best loved, and her reason best approved, almost insupportably irksome.

It was therefore, with no common degree of consolation and joy, that one day, on removing a box that stood upon her dressing-table, she beheld a letter, directed in the hand-writing of William.

With an eagerness, that she had scarcely ever felt before, she tore it open ; but she had hardly read three lines before her joy was converted into sadness ; and the tears that fell in streams from her eyes, defeated her desire of reading to the end. These were the contents :

“ If

“ If I cannot be exculpated, oh ! my beloved, from the criminal desire, to break in upon your engagements, by the extreme anxiety of mind under which I write, I know not what excuse to offer.

“ Yet you *must* pardon me, Mary ! To be wretched, as I am wretched, and to seek for no alleviation to my misery, is impossible.

“ The submission with which I received your last afflicting letter, and the silence I have preserved under it until now, will shew you that I will not lightly offend.

“ That you should make the trial that was required of you by those who call themselves your parents, I acknowledge to have been proper in you, however grievous to me ; nor could I, for a moment, doubt your finally adhering to that which you believed to be just, however I might tremble for the bias that the company, which you are compelled to keep, might give to your principles. I resolved to abide this terrific trial. But I was not

“ dued

“ duped by the indulgence that was proposed to be the consequence of it. I had no trust in the people you are with ; and I knew, that if I were to be possessed of my Mary, I must owe this invaluable blessing to her own integrity and courage alone.

“ I did not doubt you—yet I trembled.— Mary, my dear Mary, if you love still as you were wont to do, you will not blame emotions you must yourself have experienced.

“ I heard, with satisfaction, but without surprise, that the presumptuous addresses of Mr. Wynne had been repulsed with the disdain that they deserved. I could not fear a competition there. But what must be my arrogant opinion of myself, if I were not alarmed when I find the little worth I possess, unadorned as it is by personal attractions, and unsupported by the props of fortune, opposed to the acknowledged merit of Lord St. Albans,

“ set

“ set off by uncommon gracefulness of person, and by all the dazzling appendages of rank and riches !

“ Such is the picture that is drawn of him to me.—And alas ! my beloved, if if he be such as he is represented, how can I justify the selfishness, that still urges me to entreat I may not be sacrificed to his superiority ?

“ Once I flattered myself that I might have been your defender : But Lord St. Albans has written his title to that distinction in characters of blood. Was such ferocity acceptable to you ? Ah ! what is it that I would not have done to have vindicated innocence like your's, except that which Lord St. Albans did !— Yet if such a sacrifice was grateful to you—but no ! the thing is impossible ;— you might pardon such a deviation from rectitude, but you could not approve it : And have you not pardoned it ? And when I think of all the reasons you have to pardon it, can I condemn you ?

“ I

“ I can offer you nothing ; *he* offers you  
“ all that is worthy of your acceptance.—  
“ Oh ! my *once own* Mary, you know not  
“ what torture wrings my heart at this mo-  
“ ment ; you know not the cruel discord  
“ that reigns there. The struggle between  
“ self and—you—Happy, happy times !  
“ for ever gone, I fear, when these two dear  
“ interests were inseparable.

“ I *would* say, think not of me ; regard  
“ only your own happiness ;—continue to  
“ adorn the station, to which—alas ! for  
“ me !—you were born.—But I *cannot* say  
“ this.—My heart dies within me at the  
“ thought.—Yet, oh ! my beloved, believe  
“ the unadulterated sincerity, with which I  
“ I aver, that I would do more than *die*—I  
“ would resign you, rather than detract one  
“ particle from your felicity. There is a  
“ *possibility* that would reconcile my gene-  
“ rofity, and my every thing and happiness  
“ in this world : But it is so presumptuous,  
“ so unreasonable a possibility !—Can it be  
“ *indeed* possible ? Can it be that I am still  
“ the

“ the beloved of my Mary’s heart ? Still  
“ preferred, poor, uneducated rustic as I am,  
“ to the rich, the learned, and the polite ?  
“ But alas ! *could* this be so, ought I to  
“ wish to see you in that situation of life to  
“ which such a preference would lead ?—  
“ Would I willingly narrow the sphere of  
“ your excellence ? Would I confine those  
“ charms and those talents to a cottage,  
“ which would dignify a throne ? But is not  
“ this, my dearest, the language of the world  
“ and of prejudice, rather than that of the  
“ heart and of reason ? What alone are the  
“ true pursuits of life ? The exercise of vir-  
“ tue, and the permanency of happiness.—  
“ Are there more virtues to be practised on  
“ a throne, than in a cottage ? Is happiness  
“ more stable under gilded cielings, than  
“ under roofs of thatch ? Are not our virtue  
“ and happiness in proportion to our use-  
“ fulness ? Do my partialities and my wishes  
“ deceive me, when I assert that more gene-  
“ ral benefit is derived from those in the  
“ lower and middle stations of life, than  
“ from

“ from those in the higher? The great, like  
“ beacons set on a hill, may warn from dan-  
“ gers, or point to safety. Those who la-  
“ bour with the mind or the body, like the  
“ obscure rivulet, silently holds on their way,  
“ unnoticed and unthought of, until their  
“ course is marked by the fertilization that  
“ attends it.

“ What then, oh! my best beloved, are  
“ they but words without meaning, when I  
“ talk of *narrowing* the sphere of your ex-  
“ cellence, of *confining* your charms and your  
“ talents to a cottage? No where can they  
“ be more extensively useful, for no where  
“ can they be wanted so much. The be-  
“ nefit they would there confer would be  
“ almost the work of creation. Have we  
“ not heard our kind Mr. Ellis say, that he  
“ was able to do more good in one year at  
“ Llamamon than in all the years that he  
“ spent in the great world? No, if you  
“ should still dignify me, by your preferring  
“ love, I should not have to reproach my-  
“ self, than while I was greatly happy in the  
fruits

“ fruits of it, I had rendered you less *bene-*  
“ *ficial* to their fellow mortals than the God  
“ of us all had designed you to be. But  
“ who shall insure me, that I shall not  
“ render you less *happy* ?

“ Ah ! my dearest creature, believe me  
“ that I would not purchase years of felicity  
“ by one day's misery to you. I can——I  
“ *think*——I can renounce you ; but where  
“ am I to find the courage that is to support  
“ me under the conviction, that it is thro'  
“ my agency you are less happy than you  
“ would have been, had you never known  
“ me ?

“ Spare me this evil, and I will learn to  
“ bear any other you may impose.

“ If, then, your new way of life has such  
“ charms for you, as it would be painful to  
“ you to forego ; if this Lord St. Al-  
“ bans——Oh ! Heaven shield you from  
“ a pain similar to that which such a suppo-  
“ sition can inflict ! If this Lord St. Al-  
“ bans, with all his chastity, and all his  
“ merit, has thrown the once loved qualities

“ of your William into the shade—pursue  
“ your recent taste, and gratify at once your  
“ parents, your lover, and yourself.—But  
“ then be sincere, and tell me you are  
“ changed. Let me learn my fate from  
“ yourself ; and oh ! delay not the blow.—  
“ No longer can I bear the state of tortur-  
“ ing suspense, in which I have existed for  
“ some weeks past. *From* you I have heard  
“ nothing ; and all I have heard *of* you has  
“ been wretchedness.

“ You may say I ought to wait the time  
“ appointed for your decision ; but that is  
“ impossible.

“ I am assured that preparations are mak-  
“ ing for your marriage with Lord St. Al-  
“ bans ;—that you are to be his—when ?  
“ alas ! even now you may be his.—And it  
“ is an unpardonable temerity in me to en-  
“ treat, if I must be undone, that you will  
“ yourself sign the mandate of my ruin ?

“ I plead no rights ; I urge no engage-  
“ ment.—My rights were in your heart ;—  
“ your engagements were in your affections.

“ If

“ If I have lost the one—if you have  
“ changed the other, I have no rights that I  
“ would urge, you have no engagements  
“ that I wish you to keep. Be speedy, and  
“ let me know the worst. I cannot live  
“ another month in the state I am now in.

“ Perhaps you will ask after your friends.  
“ You may inquire concerning your once  
“ loved Llamamon. But what can I tell  
“ you that will give you pleasure? Our  
“ dear mother droops, and wishes not for  
“ the continuance of a life which is robbed  
“ of its best joys. Our kind Mr. Ellis has  
“ been, for many weeks, confined to his bed.  
“ Your absence has spread desolation thro'  
“ the walks of Llamamon. I have never  
“ stirred from the vicarage since I returned  
“ into Merionethshire. Mr. Ellis wishes  
“ me to close his eyes; nor will it be long  
“ before he is gratified. How will these de-  
“ tails afflict you! For even should you be  
“ changed towards me, you will be the  
“ same towards our dear mother, and our  
“ kind Mr. Ellis. They daily pray to God

“ to shower upon you the choicest blessings.  
“ Oh ! may their prayers be heard ! and  
“ the good they wish you be doubled, if it  
“ be possible, a thousand and a thousand  
“ fold !

“ My best beloved, and *ever* to be best  
“ beloved—farewell.

“ I ought to entreat your pardon for the  
“ inconveniencies and the inconsistencies of  
“ this measureless epistle, but I regard them  
“ not myself ; and with you they may serve,  
“ (as I am to be the happiest or most miser-  
“ able of men) either as a motive for pity,  
“ or as an apology for rigour.”

## CHAP. IX.



LONG as this letter was, Mary made it still longer by the torrents of tears, and the many lamentations that so mournful a picture of the state of those she so dearly loved, drew from her. In her pity for what her dear William suffered, she forgot, for a time, her power of alleviating his wretchedness; and the image of his despair, of her dear mother's grief, and the dying moments of Mr. Ellis, wholly possessed her mind.

But this forgetfulness of reason continued not long.—She roused herself, and resolved to exert her own courage, that she might inspire it to those who seemed to rely upon her alone for consolation and support.

The hours of each day were, with her, too strictly called to account, to allow her any time unobserved, but that which she stole from sleep. How tediously then crept the moments until the usually late, or rather early hour, of Lady Caroline's domestic economy came, which consigned herself, and all her household, to rest.

Mary retired to bed, and dismissed her attendant; but she was no sooner withdrawn, than she again rose, eager to speak comfort to William, and to exculpate herself. Thus she wrote :

“ Who told you that preparations were  
“ making for my marriage with Lord St.  
“ Albans? Who told you that I might be  
“ already his? Was it the same person who  
“ gave

“ gave you so flattering a picture of his  
“ charms and his virtues? Equally authen-  
“ tic was each intelligence.

“ My dear friend, shall I reproach you  
“ for giving credit to reports so injurious to  
“ me, or shall I console you under the  
“ misery these reports have inflicted upon  
“ you? I ought, perhaps, to reproach you;  
“ and I can think of nothing but how to  
“ console you.

“ No, my dear William, I am not chang-  
“ ed; my taste, my affections, my prin-  
“ ciples, are the very same I imbibed with the  
“ air I breathed at dear Llaimamon. But I  
“ claim no merit from this. Not to prefer  
“ what I once possessed, to that which I am  
“ now compelled to endure, would speak  
“ me as void of reason as of virtue.

“ My good friend, you know not the life,  
“ the manners, the persons whom you be-  
“ lieve to be so alluring. Nor am I mistress  
“ of a pencil that can paint them in their  
“ true colours.

“ This Lord St. Albans ! your hero, or  
“ the hero of your unknown informers, so  
“ formidably arrayed in the divine panoply  
“ of virtues and graces.—What is he ? A  
“ person of no energy ; yet capable of acts  
“ of the most daring folly. Selfish, licen-  
“ tious, unprincipled—a murderer ! yes, a  
“ murderer in *design*, if not in *fact* ; and yet  
“ you have suffered yourself to believe he  
“ might be united to me ! Oh ! William !  
“ William ! when I am happy enough to  
“ allow me to think of revenge, how shall  
“ you suffer for this.”

“ I know not whether he possesses the un-  
“ common gracefulness of person, which you  
“ impute to him ; for I have looked at him  
“ so little, that his features are scarcely  
“ known to me.—But this I know, that in  
“ my eyes he has not a single charm. I see  
“ him only as opposed to you.—Shrink not  
“ from the comparison—you have no need.  
“ In the one, I see all that is manly, gene-  
“ rous, humane, and virtuous. In the other,  
“ nothing

“ nothing but what is frivolous, selfish, un-  
“ feeling, and unjust. The one is ready to  
“ sacrifice rights the most unquestionable, a  
“ happiness the most dear to him, prospects  
“ the most seductive, to the imagined pos-  
“ sibility that such a sacrifice may contribute  
“ to the happiness of her he loves.

“ The other, in defiance of all rights,  
“ grasps at the possession of a woman, who  
“ declares the most decided preference to  
“ another, seeks self-gratification in the  
“ misery of her who is to bestow it, and for  
“ a momentary indulgence to himself, would  
“ mark every coming hour of her life with  
“ wretchedness and despair.

“ Think you, my dear friend, I do not  
“ love *myself* too well, not to continue to  
“ love *you* ?

“ You will ask whence then comes praise  
“ to such a character as I have described.

“ What says the proverb ? In the coun-  
“ try of the blind, the one eyed is a King.  
“ But if Lord St. Albans is less imperfect  
“ than his companions, is that a reason why

“ I should prefer him to those who have no  
“ blemish ? Shall I, who have breathed the  
“ pure air of virtue and Llamamon, desire  
“ to respire the thick and adulterated at-  
“ mosphere that now surrounds me ? Ah !  
“ no ! did my power second my will, far,  
“ far would I fly from *your* man of excellence,  
“ and London for ever.

“ Be assured, my dear William, it is not  
“ my heart alone that makes this preference ;  
“ it is my reason, and my principles.

“ Those manners, of which we have heard  
“ so much, and which we have imagined so  
“ refined, so soft, so delicate, would put  
“ rustics to the blush, and cover our milk-  
“ maids with confusion. I cannot delineate  
“ them to you. The least reproach to the  
“ life those lead, with whom I now associate,  
“ is, that it is one continued idleness ; and  
“ deviation into action leads to vice. How  
“ unintelligible here would be your defini-  
“ tion of the true purposes of life—useful-  
“ ness ! It is for mechanics, William. A  
“ man of fashion, a woman of the ton, would  
“ blush

“ blush to be called useful.—And even happiness, the permanent and the true, is as little their care as usefulness. What they seek are the evanescent joys of momentary gratification.—“ Let the morrow take care for the things of itself,” say they.—“ But do you suppose *me* so short-sighted for the future, and so prodigal of the present ?

“ Real permanent happiness, founded on the basis of active virtue, is the object of my wishes, and of my pursuit. Whether it is to be mine in this life, or in the next, belongs not to me to decide ; but as the reward is sure, if I keep on my right way, so will I not turn aside for any of those glittering baits which so perpetually cross my path, and which you think endanger my stumbling.

“ Soon, indeed, did the veil of indulgence, with which Sir James and Lady Caroline had sought to involve their real designs, drop from before my eyes.

“ I found I had been duped ; but I found not, therefore, any reason for an undue

“ precipitancy on my part. Never, except  
“ driven to an extremity I cannot fear, will  
“ I disgrace the legitimate, the honourable  
“ love I bear you, by becoming a runaway,  
“ and an offender against the laws of my  
“ country. You know my resolution on  
“ this head—it is irrevocable. Where,  
“ then, can I so much *wish* to pass the inter-  
“ vening time, between the present and  
“ that in which I mean to act for myself, as  
“ in the house of my parents? It is possible  
“ I might pass it elsewhere with somewhat  
“ more pleasure in the present, but certainly  
“ nowhere with so much reputation for the  
“ future. Suffer not, however, your former  
“ doubts to recur. Think not that I shall,  
“ as you once expressed it, become accus-  
“ tomed to trappings, until I cannot go  
“ safely without them. Do not suppose  
“ that lords and ladies will have charms for  
“ me. Could you know them, you would  
“ not affront me by so injurious a suspicion.  
“ The delights of my childhood shall never  
“ fade from my remembrance. “ Ease,  
“ elegance,

“ elegance, and luxury, will, I hope, always  
“ be exchanged by me, not only with pa-  
“ tience, but satisfaction, for “ labour, rusti-  
“ city, and a bare competence,” while ease  
“ is idleness, elegance fastidiousness, and  
“ luxury voluptuousness. The life I now  
“ lead will confirm my predilection for that  
“ to which I look forward, and having  
“ known all it can bestow, I shall be secure  
“ from those longings after an imaginary  
“ good, which so often despoil real happiness  
“ of its power to bless. Thus will the pre-  
“ sent not be wholly profitless to the future.  
“ Depend upon that future, my dear friend.  
“ It offers us all that is necessary to happi-  
“ ness and virtue. Nor do I shrink from  
“ the interval. I shall be threatened ;—I  
“ shall be tormented ; but I cannot be  
“ compelled ; and when I am found to be  
“ incorrigibly unworthy of my boasted *birth*,  
“ perhaps I shall be abandoned to my fate,  
“ and left at liberty to seek the asylum  
“ which I know love and industry will offer  
“ me.

“ Oh ! William, if you knew how my  
“ mind exults at the thoughts of quitting,  
“ for ever, these regions of insolence, idleness,  
“ and vice, you would hush all the doubts  
“ and disquietudes of your heart to rest,  
“ and wonder how you could distrust the  
“ integrity of mine. Be easy, then, my  
“ friend, or at least suffer no anxieties to  
“ find admission into your bosom, but those  
“ which are inseparable from absence.

“ But alas ! my friend, although I can  
“ speak comfort to you, I cannot give health  
“ to my dear Mr. Ellis ; I cannot give hap-  
“ piness to my beloved mother. What a  
“ picture have you drawn of the once health-  
“ ful and gay scenes of dear Llamamon ! Oh !  
“ could I fly to that cherished spot, and  
“ bring healing and gaiety under my wings !

“ Shall I come ? Those who were once  
“ more than my parents, languish for my  
“ presence : Ought I not to quit those,  
“ who, although really so, seem to ficken at  
“ the sight of me ? Let our dear Mr. Ellis  
“ decide

“ decide for us. If he says come, I fly to  
“ you.

“ My dear mother, let me say a word to  
“ you.—Why are you thus cast down?—  
“ Let me exhort you to courage; let me  
“ instruct you in it.—There's presumption;  
“ but you do not know how well I have  
“ begun to think of myself since I have kept  
“ *good* company. We shall meet again—  
“ doubt it not; we shall meet again, and  
“ be happy.

“ You shall see me resume, under your  
“ eye, those offices in which you first in-  
“ structed me; you shall see me exchange  
“ my gaudy robes for my brown rufflet;—  
“ you shall hear me carol over my labours,  
“ and you shall forget that I was ever sepa-  
“ rated from you. Ah! what a world is  
“ this, ~~that~~ you once knew, and which I  
“ wish I had never known! Sometimes I  
“ cannot believe what I hear and see. I  
“ blush every minute, and I shrink from  
“ the conversation of the *best* company. I  
“ find, with astonishment, that education,

“ rank,

“ rank, and fortune, do not secure from  
“ ignorance, meanness, and want. How  
“ can these things be? Cannot you and Mr.  
“ Ellis explain them to William? Will he  
“ not otherways be unable to comprehend  
“ what I have told him, and may perhaps  
“ find incredible the aversion I express for  
“ such society.

“ Above all, my dear mother, comfort  
“ yourself; watch over our dear Mr. Ellis;  
“ restore him to health: Exhort William to  
“ exertion, and all will be well.

“ Will not my dear father, who always  
“ taught me “ to be hopeful,” assist you in  
“ the task? Let William find this farm and  
“ his two cows; do you prepare me a clean  
“ cottage and a little garden, and I fly to  
“ you, to learn prudence by your precepts,  
“ and industry by your example.

“ This letter is as long as a sermon, and  
“ as grave. William’s letter has made me  
“ *so* sorry! and then I am obliged to think  
“ so much—to reason—to settle the right  
“ and the wrong—to preserve my heart so  
“ firm,

“ firm, and my manners so yielding ;—to  
“ resist to the death in one point—to con-  
“ form in all others.—Ah ! it is too much  
“ for my little reason, and my light heart.  
“ Such habits of gravity and wisdom come  
“ upon me, that I look every morning for  
“ grey hairs. My tresses, however, so far  
“ continue to flow in auburn ringlets ; and  
“ e'er they take a silver hue, I trust I shall  
“ resign my wisdom into your hands, as a  
“ store from whence to draw upon emergent  
“ occasions, as in time past—and my gravity  
“ to—whoever will accept of it.

“ My dear mother, my father, my kind  
“ Mr. Ellis, my good, and dear friend Wil-  
“ liam, farewell ! and comfort or encourage  
“ one another.

“ You shall hear from me, if any change  
“ happens ; but write as seldom as possible,  
“ lest frequent letters should lead to detec-  
“ tion, and put an end to our intercourse.”

Mary

Mary conjectured, that she owed the receipt of William's letter to the intervention of the house maid, and she concluded that she should find her ready to take charge of her. Accordingly, when next she saw her, she delivered her the letter she had written, saying, as she looked earnestly at her, " You will take care that this letter is put safely into the post."

The girl blushed ; but replied, " You may depend upon me, Madam ;" and Mary had no longer any doubt of the friendliness of her intentions.

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## CHAP. X.

SPEEDY as Mary had been, in administering consolation to William, the days that passed between the hour in which he had written, to that wherein he received her answer, had appeared of an immeasurable length. His visits to the post-office had been daily, even when he knew it was impossible he should find what he sought.— But when the impatiently expected letter was put into his hands, he was seized with an universal trembling, and was obliged to fit

fit down upon the ground, before he could gain steadiness of hand sufficient to open it.

No sooner had his eye hastily caught the sense of the first lines, than he started up, and ran like lightning towards Llamamon. Breathless, he rushed into Mr. Ellis's room, and exclaiming, "She is true—she is mine!" sunk motionless on a chair.

The feeble old man felt a thrill of joy shoot to his heart, that for a moment seemed to restore him to his full vigour.

"Did I not tell you so?" cried he.—  
"Mary is Heaven's choicest work."

William, now recollecting, began to reproach himself for the imprudence he had been guilty of; but Mr. Ellis, his eyes sparkling with delight, told him, the sight of his joy was his best cordial, and he bade him place himself by him, and read the letter aloud.

William

William endeavoured to obey him ; but the violence of his emotions made this impossible ; and before the lecture was half over, Eleanor entered the room. Her presence increased the general happiness ; and could Mary have witnessed the power she maintained over the three people, whom she best loved in the world, she would have thought herself the happiest creature in it.

When William read her offer to come directly to Mr. Ellis, “ Do pray, dear Sir,” said he, “ give your sanction to this blessed proposal. Why should our dear Mary continue in the haunts of wickedness, with those who so little know her value ?”

“ Ah ! William,” replied Mr. Ellis, “ have you so little profited by the justness of thought so visible in all that Mary writes ? Shall my selfishness, or your’s, counteract the good sense and propriety which dictate the determinations of this excellent creature ? She sees truly the place where she ought to be,

be, and it is our duty to encourage her to persist in her resolution to abide there."

The address to Eleanor melted her into tears, but it gave none of the courage that it was meant to inspire.

"Oh ! my beloved, my excellent child !" cried she ; "but alas ! I shall never, never see her more !"

"Forbear, Eleanor," said Mr. Ellis ; "it is indeed very probable that *I* shall never see her again ; yet I will not reject the hope she is so solicitous to give ; and *you* have no reason, with respect to yourself, to suppose it will be in vain."

"Three years, Sir !" returned Eleanor ; "three years ! Think of that.—How is it possible I should ever see her again ?"

"Be assured," said Mr. Ellis, "that her fate will come to an issue much before the end of three years. The violences of those unworthy parents will drive her upon measures

measures that she disapproves, but which she is not, it seems, wholly unprepared for."

" God grant it !" said William, fervently.

" William ?" said Mr. Ellis, with a half smile.

" Ah ! Sir, if I am wrong," cried William, " forgive me ; but how could I be sorry for any conduct that shortened the period of my beloved Mary's trials, and opened her an allowed shelter in these arms !"

" We must endeavour to make that shelter as eligible as possible," said Mr. Ellis.— " Hitherto, my dear William, I have kept you idle, from a weak indulgence to the only selfish wish I entertain on this side the grave. But I am convinced that I shall not long remain an obstacle to your praise-worthy exertions : Nor will the time you have passed by my bed-side be wholly lost ; but of that no more. I am worth six hundred pounds ; I have not a relation in the world who has a claim upon it ; it shall be your's. With it you will be able to stock a farm, and immediately to begin the world for yourself.

This will be an asylum worthy of Mary, and to her taste. A few months will put you in possession of this sum; so look around you, and fix upon a situation that will be agreeable to yourself, and to her."

William was struck dumb with this proof of the parental love and consideration of his more than parent. He clasped his hands. He pressed them to his lips, but he could not speak.—At length—long, very long before—a passion of tears broke in upon his speech.

"The period," said Mr. Ellis, "will be when it pleases God; and come when it will, let it be your consolation, my dear child, that it comes not before it is earnestly wished for by me. Could I have seen you united with Mary, and happily settled, I should have seen all in this world that I desired;—but I am more than indemnified for any coming short in my own wishes, by seeing the propriety and rectitude that rules the mind, and

and resolutions of my darling. Write to her, William ; tell her how sensible I am of her ardent love for me, but enjoin her to continue where she is. If I can force my trembling hand to obey the dictates of my heart, I will subjoin my blessing. Tell her of your prospects ; such expectations will cheer her, and a certainty, that, come when she will, she will not be a burthen to you ; will remove the only painful consideration, that, when she thinks of her union with you, presses, perhaps, upon her heart."

" And William," said Eleanor, " let your farm be near Llamamon."

William could scarcely speak ; he could not think, and was at length obliged to withdraw, that he might recollect and compose himself.

When a little recovered from the effect of his grateful and joyous emotions, he returned to Mr. Ellis's chamber, and there poured

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forth the varied emotions of his heart, earnestly praying, that long might it be before he reaped any benefit from the generous intentions of his kind benefactor.

Mr. Ellis, exhausted by all that had passed, at length desired to be left alone, and William withdrawing, retired to write to Mary. Thus he wrote :

“ I am now, my beloved, almost as incapable of thinking justly from the effects of joy, as I was when I last wrote, from those of grief.

“ What language affords words that can express the transports with which your dear and invaluable letter has filled my heart? The feelings of the heart, when they are exquisite and extatic, as those I now experience, are indeed inexplicable by words, but they will not be the less understood by you. It is to your tenderness, to your generosity and truth, that I appeal, for a knowledge of those emotions which

“ which love and gratitude have raised in  
“ my mind.

“ Were not doubt inseparable from un-  
“ blessed affection, I could not forgive my-  
“ self for the apprehensions and misgivings  
“ that so cruelly tortured me a little while  
“ ago. Your constancy, your love, your  
“ preference of the simple and virtuous life  
“ of useful industry, to the ornamented vice  
“ of profitless idleness, appears so just, so  
“ right, so consonant to all I ever knew of  
“ my Mary, that nothing seems more cul-  
“ pable in my eyes, than the fears I once suf-  
“ fered to find admittance into my mind.—  
“ Could it be, that I had lost her image  
“ from my remembrance, and substituted  
“ in her place something the very reverse of  
“ what she was? You will make me no re-  
“ proaches; but I can never cease to re-  
“ proach myself. Be assured, however, that  
“ my doubts shall never recur: They could  
“ be founded only on the false ideas I had  
“ entertained of the manners and principles  
“ of those, who, possessing every means of  
“ thinking

“ thinking justly, and acting rightly, I had  
“ conceived must so think, and so act.—  
“ You have undeceived me; you have re-  
“ conciled my love for myself, with my love  
“ for you.

“ Yes, my beloved; poor rustic as I am,  
“ it is not vanity convinces me that there is  
“ more happiness to my Mary in an union  
“ with her William, than in any she could  
“ form with those who are regarded as so  
“ much his superiors. It is not vanity, I  
“ say, that produces this conviction; for it  
“ is grounded not on my virtues, but on  
“ your's.

“ Yet, my beloved creature, even to  
“ minds moderate and simple as your own,  
“ unremitted labour, and scanty subsistence,  
“ are misfortunes;—and to misfortune I  
“ could never have invited you. But my  
“ swelling heart is scarcely retained within  
“ my bosom, when I tell you that such will  
“ not be your destiny as the wife of your  
“ William.

“ Our  
“ mind to mind I should not cast a smile upon  
“ the scenes of bohemian and rov'dold w'ld  
“ vbsqulA.

“ Our good, our kind and beneficent, our  
“ more than parental Mr. Ellis, shelters us  
“ from such a fate. He has adopted us  
“ for his children; he will enable us to  
“ make our labour productive; he will put  
“ the means of attaining ease and affluence  
“ into our hands.

“ It is not a cottage I shall prepare for  
“ you; it is a warm and substantial farm-  
“ house, stored within with all that can con-  
“ tribute to comfort; stocked without with  
“ all that can contribute to profit; and it  
“ is Mr. Ellis who will furnish me with the  
“ means of doing this. But alas! my  
“ dearest, it is by misfortune that we are to  
“ arrive at happiness! This dear friend will  
“ rather *bequeath* than *bestow* these means.  
“ already I hear you join with me in ex-  
“ claiming, long, very long may it be before  
“ we possess them! The wish is ardent, but  
“ vain. The *mortal* existence of this inva-  
“ luable man can be prolonged but for a  
“ short time; far, far short, I fear, of that  
“ in which you have promised to be mine.

“ Already he longs after his well secured paradise, and he bids us make this our consolation. Thus it is that he orders me to write to you ; that you may be “ cheered with the prospect before you ; and lose all fear that you shall be a burthen to me ;” a burthen, Mary ! Oh ! would to Heaven he would have sanctioned your pious desire of administering to the wants of his last moments ! but he forbids you to think of it ; he commands you to continue where you are, and to justify, by the propriety of your present conduct, that you meditate in future. You have referred yourself to his judgment, and I wish you not to dispute it ; yet I see not what advantage can accrue from your longer continuance where you are.

“ Our dear mother is overwhelmed with the emotions your letter has excited ; and hope in her heart has been too long dead, quickly to revive ; but your fostering care and kindness may yet restore it to her.

“ Continue,

“ Continue, my dearest, to write to me ;  
 “ and remember, although I will doubt no  
 “ more, I can only know happiness from my  
 “ communication with you.

*Written by Mr. ELLIS.*

“ Go on, my blessed child, in the path of  
 “ reason, virtue, and simplicity ; peace of  
 “ mind in the progress, and Heaven in re-  
 “ version, are the sure rewards. My last  
 “ breath shall bless you.

“ FAREWELL !”

CHAP. XI.

THE secure and certain intercourse that was now established between William and Mary, communicated so much peace to her mind, as to enable her to support, with patience and cheerfulness, the daily increasing tyranny and oppression of Sir James and Lady Caroline.

No disguise was now attempted. She was told, in the most explicit terms, that she must prepare to become the wife of Lord St. Al-bans, and to this denunciation there seemed

to be no alternative ; it was absolute, and she could not but observe, that both Sir James and Lady Caroline appeared certain of carrying their point.

Lord St. Albans scarcely ever quitted her ; and while he wearied her with continual professions of the most ardent love, and promises of the greatest future indulgence, he plainly shewed that he could love no one but himself, and that he was the abettor of all her present sufferings.

Lady Caroline now trusted her hardly a moment from her sight. Madame de Merville was established in her room, which she quitted not, when Mary was there, night nor day. It was rarely that she was now permitted to visit at Mrs. Elliot's ; and all intercourse, beyond the coldest civility, was forbidden between her and Anna.

In these circumstances, she would have found it extremely difficult to have received

William's letters, had it not been for the address of the friendly house-maid, who, without coming to any explanation, or appearing to take any part but that of a respectful domestic, never failed to find an opportunity, unobserved, of conveying them to her hands. The difficulty of writing to him was still greater. But as love is even more wakeful than suspicion, Mary found hours in every night in which she could employ herself unnoticed by her drowsy spy. She repeated her injunctions, however, to William, to write seldom; and she contented herself with only giving him, from time to time, short details of her own situation.

It was now the middle of June, and Mary learnt, that the family was to remove into the country in a few days. She heard this with pleasure, for she conceived it impossible that she should not enjoy more liberty, and lead a life more to her taste, in a large house, in the quiet and the pure air of the country, than

than in the narrower limits of a town residence, and the smoke and noise of London. The season of the year had rendered the restraint, to which she was subjected, almost insupportably irksome. She panted after the sight of green fields and woods, and, in the exultation of her heart, she wrote thus to William :

“ No more crowded rooms, no more suffocating effluvia of misnamed essences ;—  
“ no more immeasurable dinners, where  
“ gluttony and idleness strive for mastery.—  
“ I am going to respire the free air of the  
“ country ; I am going to breathe its sweets,  
“ and enjoy its liberty ; yet shall I carry  
“ those with me who will contaminate all its  
“ delights. I am not, however, unthankful to exchange the *intolerable* for the *tolerable*, and forgetting, as much as I can, the present, think only of the future ;—of  
“ that future, where nature and virtue will  
“ enjoy their full rights. Oh ! how I long  
“ to exchange, and *for ever*, the resplendent

“ drawing-room, for the neatly swept par-  
“ lour—the long succession of pernicious  
“ cookery, for the single dish of wholesome  
“ viands; idleness for industry, and, above  
“ every thing, the society of all that dis-  
“ graces human nature, for all that adorns  
“ it. These people are like the peace of  
“ God;—they pass all understanding—at  
“ least my understanding: Their pleasures,  
“ their chagrins, their pursuits, are all alike  
“ incomprehensible to me. William, my  
“ dear William, the time will come when I  
“ shall bid adieu to this farrago of vice and  
“ nonsense. Heaven preserve our dear Mr.  
“ Ellis to witness and bless these moments!  
“ My heart has scarcely lain still an instant  
“ since you told me he was better; who  
“ knows what your unwearied care may do  
“ for him? And should those with whom I  
“ am proceed to extremities, who knows  
“ but that I may add my cares to your's?—  
“ Our faithful friend goes with us; and I  
“ shall still receive, through her means, any  
“ intelligence

“ intelligence you direct to Rookby Park,  
“ near Dunstable.”

Mary beheld, with inexpressible delight, the hour arrive that was to bear her from London; she sprung into the coach, and as she took what she hoped might be the last view of the smoke darkened buildings around her, her pleasure was so great, that she almost forgot that Lord St. Albans was seated by her side.

“ My dear creature,” cried he, looking earnestly at her, “ I have not seen that lovely countenance so enlightened of ages.—Can I be happy enough to contribute to the pleasure that beams there ?”

“ You my lord ? Ah ! when do you ever contribute to my pleasure ?

“ It is not for want of the most ardent desire to do so,” returned he.—“ But if I am not

not the cause; pray indulge me with telling me what is."

"I fear it will be incomprehensible to you," said Mary.—"Your Lordship feels no joy in quitting smoke, noise, and dissipation, for pure air, quiet, and leisure."

"How much are you mistaken," said Lord St. Albans.—"With you I care not if I were to turn Anchoret."

"Idleness, in one shape or other," returned Mary, scornfully, "I know is your Lordship's taste. But for my own part, I would have not a moment of the day unmarked with usefulness, and I hope that in Hertfordshire I shall be allowed to resume some of those employments, that the more important business of injuring my health, and throwing away my time, have, for many weeks, suspended."

"Oh!" cried Lady Caroline, with malice in her tone, "don't be afraid; we will find you business enough in the country."

"But not in Hertfordshire," cried Sir James, laughing.—"It is really so easy to dupe."

dupe you, my wise little daughter, that there is no pleasure in it. To tell you the truth, then, we suspect, that in spite of our precautions, you have found means to communicate with that clown of your's ; but the channel, whatever it was, through which you conveyed your intelligence, will now be shut up. He will seek you in vain in Hertfordshire, while we have you closely immured in Cumberland."

Mary coloured with vexation.

" Is this, my Lord," said she, turning to Lord St. Albans, " one of the ways by which you mean to contribute to my pleasure ?"

" My dear creature," returned he, " this measure will contribute to more than your pleasure ; it will redound to your lasting advantage ; it will be your preservation."

Mary gave him a look of contempt, and was silent, revolving, in her mind, the consequences of the deceit that had been practised.

She knew, that while the faithful house-maid continued near her, she had it still in her power to maintain her intercourse with William, but she could not help entertaining some suspicion that her agent might be discovered by means of the letter, that she had no doubt would be directed to her in Hertfordshire. What also increased her fears, was the impossibility of her apprising William of the danger before her arrival at her journey's end ; for until she should re-join her emissary, she had no means of writing to him.

The disturbance of her mind, while these thoughts passed through it, was so strongly imprinted on her countenance, that, to the scrutinizing eye of Sir James, there was no farther evidence necessary to convince him, even to demonstration, of the private correspondence which had been hitherto carried on ; and hence he resolved to double his diligence, to discover by what means it had been maintained.

Mary's.

Mary's patience was now put to a severe trial. The party, as if to torment her, loitered on the road ; and while she found it impossible to disengage herself from the observation of one or other of them, the journey was prolonged to the evening of the fifth day.

## CHAP. XII.

AT length they arrived at the family mansion of the Seabrights ;—a large and venerable pile, long neglected by its owners, and now fallen into decay.

A few rooms had been repaired, and set somewhat in order for the present occasion, but nothing had been done beyond what was absolutely necessary, and an air of universal desolation prevailed.

### The

The party arrived late in the evening, and after having passed through a large and gloomy hall, lighted only by narrow windows, placed many yards above the ground, they found themselves in a spacious saloon, decorated with oak wainscots, and furnished with high backed chairs and massive tables. The windows, in size and situation, resembled those of the hall, and at the late hour, in which they emitted the little light they could afford, rather increased the general gloom than dispelled it.

Lady Caroline exclaimed—" Good Heavens ! Sir James, did you not tell me this place was not quite a dungeon ?"

" It is many years since I was here," returned Sir James, carelessly ; " I scarcely remember what it was ; but I dare say it will answer our purposes very well, and we can procure a few carpets from the neighbouring town for the little time we shall stay here."

" I

"I cannot stay another moment in this room," said Lady Caroline; "it gives me the vapours; the sound of my feet frightens me.—Where does this door lead to? Pray call for candles; and do order a fire; it is as damp as a prison."

"A prison!" repeated Mary to herself, and her heart died within her.

"Come, come hither," cried Lady Caroline, from another room, and in a sprightlier tone.—"This is something more tolerable; and with sofas, and moveable tables, it will be possible to exist here for a few weeks, perhaps."

Sir James and Lord St. Albans followed her; but Mary, struck with Sir James's words, "It will answer our purposes very well," and overcome with the gloom that surrounded her, and the sense how completely she was now separated from all who would respect her feelings, or pity her distress, remained immovable in the middle of the saloon, with her eyes fixed on the ground, and

and meditating upon what possible mischiefs might be designed her.

“ They hope nothing,” said she to herself, “ from my consent ; and who shall protect me from their power ? Oh ! William, my confidence has undone both you and myself ! ”

Lady Caroline’s voice roused her from her sad reverie.

“ Where’s Mary ? Why don’t you come into this room, child ? ”

Mary moved slowly towards it, but felt no alleviation from the painfulness of her feelings, from the gayer appearance of this other apartment.—It was hung with paper ; the windows were lower, and the room itself smaller.

Lady Caroline was busy in arranging what furniture was already there, and in resolving what

what she should send for. A harpsichord, which she had sent from town, was already placed there, and on this Lord St. Albans was running over a few notes. A large wood fire was just set blazing; several candles were lighted, and a general cheerfulness seemed to prevail with all but Mary.

“ Now,” cried Lady Caroline, opening another door, “ if this should lead into a decent dining-room, this place will not be so intolerable. It is rather sombre, said she, just looking in, and shrinking back; but not so tremendous as the dreadful saloon. We will sup here to night, and to-morrow I shall have more courage to explore the dark recesses of this enchanted castle, and to determine what parts of it we may venture to inhabit.”

Supper was soon brought in, and Lady Caroline, her spirits rising with the thoughts of how wide a field she should have wherein to display her taste, and love of expence, in  
her

her new modelling, and furnishing the old mansion, became very gay. She uttered a thousand witticisms, or what she thought witticisms, on the long cravatted heroes, and high tired dames of past times; coquettted with Lord St. Albans; scoffed at Mary;—rallied Sir James; and concluded with declaring she thought herself very agreeable.

Mary heard, and saw nothing of all this. She sat buried in thought, and unable to determine clearly what it was that she apprehended.

“ The country does not seem to give you the delight you expected,” said Lord St. Albans to her.

“ I see nothing here,” returned Mary, “ of the country to which I have been accustomed.”

“ Smokey rafters, with a flitch of bacon hanging from them, is all the idea she has of rural felicity,” said Lady Caroline.

Mary

Mary made no answer; but resting her head upon her hand, suffered the tears to roll unheeded down her cheeks.

“I cannot bear this,” said Lord St. Albans.—“My dearest creature, what is it that distresses you? What is it that so oppresses your mind?”

“I know not,” said Mary, with a sob and a broken voice; “but never did I enter a place which filled me with so many melancholy and alarming ideas.”

The look that was interchanged between Lord St. Albans and Sir James on these words created new fears, and hastily rising from her seat, and throwing herself on her knees before Sir James, she cried out, “Oh! tell me—tell me what you mean to do with me? What is the purpose for which this terrible mansion will answer so well?”

Lord St. Albans caught her up.

“Rise,

"Rise, my beloved creature," said he; "banish these unworthy fears. What can you apprehend with parents who doat on you, and a man who would die to serve you?"

"Parents who doat on me! a man who would die to serve me!" repeated Mary, as she struggled to disengage herself from Lord St. Albans.

"Nothing can be more true," said Sir James; "the proof will be irrefragable.—For your sake, Lady Caroline and myself have been careless of the pleasures which the present season offers to the choice of people of fashion; for your sake we have determined to immure ourselves in this dismal place; for your sake we have resolved to run all lengths, rather than that you should bestow yourself unworthily; and Lord St. Albans kindly co-operates in all our plans;—he makes equal sacrifices; and be assured you will never go beyond these walls, except you pass them as his wife."

At these words a deadly coldness ran thro' Mary's veins; an universal paleness spread itself over her countenance, and her head dropt lifelessly on her bosom.

Lord St. Albans threw water in her face.

"Oh! wound me not," cried he, "with marks of so deeply rooted an aversion;—make me not repent of the engagement I have entered into, never to abandon you; make me not doubt of the merit of saving you from one so unworthy of your charms."

"Cruelly hurt, indeed!" said Lady Caroline, "to be the wife of the most accomplished nobleman in England.—My lord, you almost deserve the scorn you meet with, for the foolish pity you shew."

Lord St. Albans was, however, really moved by the distress of Mary; and kneeling at her feet, said all he thought likely to soothe and comfort her.

A flood of tears had relieved the oppression of her heart, and restored her power of thought.

“Rise, rise, my lord,” said she, repulsing him; “I feel I am in your power. I know I am far from all who would, or could save me; but know, that nothing but the most outrageous force shall ever make me your wife.”

“We will not think of force,” cried Sir James; “here you will have a fair opportunity of understanding Lord St. Albans’ merits unbiassed by any prejudices of your own;—here you will have time to weigh the alternative of being restored to the world the happy wife of one of the most charming men in it, surrounded by every splendor, pleasure, or distinction, that rank and riches can give, or of wasting your youth in this dreary mansion, secluded from every human eye, and all human converse. There will not be occasion for force to determine your choice, such as we wish it to be.”

“ I protest against *all* rigorous measures,” said Lord St. Albans.—“ I would owe the blessing of this dear hand to the free choice and flattering distinction of its beloved owner ; and to these I shall owe it, I doubt not, if your kindness for me, Sir James, does not lead you to precipitate matters.—If you will (forgive the seeming vanity) if you will allow the good sense, and the good taste of this dear creature, time to operate in my favour.”

“ I have already,” returned Sir James, “ granted more time to the indulgence of her depraved fancy than policy, or even parental affection can justify, and your lordship sees the effects.—Have we not all the reason in the world to suppose that this conscientious fair one, who makes such a route about virtue and principles, has broken her word solemnly given to me ? that she has found means of holding correspondence with that worthless fellow, to whom her scandalous attachment is a disgrace to her sex : and that the grief and apprehension, which now seems

to

to overwhelm her, proceed wholly from all means of maintaining this ignoble intercourse being cut off? What farther time would you have me allow to such a rebel?"

"I cannot suffer such harshness," replied Lord St. Albans, angrily; "and if you mean to oblige me, Sir James, you must treat your lovely daughter with that tenderness merit, such as her's, well deserves.—My beloved creature, cried he, endeavouring to take her hand, be assured——"

"Spare your assurances, my lord," said Mary, withdrawing it.—"Once I have been duped by blandishments—by the pretended kindness of a *parent*.—Unwillingly I exchanged confidence for suspicion; but being once conscious of having been deceived, I can be cheated no more. If you would have me believe the love you profess for me, leave me free;—free as God and nature designed I should be. The taste and sense which you now so insidiously compliment, may then operate in your favour; but neither

"taste nor sense would justify me in preferring my oppressor to my defender."

"There, there!" cried Sir James, in a passion.—"Do you hear her? An open avowal of the falsehood and deceit she has practised."

"Surely," returned Mary, "my words can bear no such meaning. But allow me to say, that the contract which I am reproached with as having broken, was mutual. Have the conditions been kept on your part, Sir?"

"You acknowledge, then, they have not been kept on yours?" said Sir James.

"Indeed I do not.—Most religiously they were kept, until the idea of your part of the engagement was ridiculed; until I was told it was impossible, and even wicked to keep it.—I was laughed at for my credulity, and called upon not to make my own choice, but to adopt implicitly and instantaneously that which was made for me."

"And

" And then you renewed your intercourse with that clown ?" said Sir James.

Mary smiled—but it was a smile of contempt.

" And then," said she, " I looked upon myself at liberty to renew my intercourse with the man of my choice, and who is worthy of being so. Whether I found means so to do, belongs to you, Sir, to discover, not to me to confess."

" Insolent !" said Lady Caroline.

" I am very unhappy," cried Mary, " that the duties I owe to truth, and to discretion, should subject me to such a change; and especially from the persons in the world I am naturally most bound to reverence, and whom, in any other circumstances, I should be most happy to obey."

" Oh ! Madam," cried she, throwing herself suddenly on her knees before Lady Caroline, " you are my *mother*; by all the tender affections; by all the soft indulgence

attendant on that name, I conjure you to be my *friend*! You know not—you cannot conceive the unbounded influence that engaging character will give you over my mind, nor how much I shall consider myself as bound to sacrifice to its wishes."

" You then make no account of the character of a mother?" said Lady Caroline, coldly.

" Alas!" cried Mary, weeping, " if I am to find mother but an empty name, what account *can* I make of it?"

" Well, child, rise," said Lady Caroline. " You may be assured I will prove myself your friend, and your best friend; but I shall not take your opinion as to the mode of my friendship: and now pray let us think of going to bed; I abominate these scenes.—Such romantic flights distract me. Nothing can be plainer than the road we all have before us, if we do not confound ourselves by sophistry and refinement. It is our part to dictate, yours to obey. You will find this, child,

child, in your bible, and here ought to be an end of the matter."

Lady Caroline then desired Sir James to call for candles, saying, " Let us have abundance of light; I quite tremble with the thoughts of exploring more of this gloomy mansion."

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CHAP. XIII.

THE way to the bed-chambers led thro' the melancholy saloon, at the farther end of which a door opened into a small hall, from whence went a pair of stairs, which led to a long gallery, in which were many different apartments.

The house-keeper, who had been sent down from town, attended to shew those which had been respectively appointed for each of the party.

The

The one assigned to Mary was a small room immediately on the top of the stairs ; a door opened from it into a large closet, which communicated with Lady Caroline's apartment ; so that, by locking the door which led to the stairs, there were no means of entering it, except through Lady Caroline's room.

Madame de Merville had declined to accompany the family into Cumberland, under pretence of bad health ; but in fact, as she was really a good-natured woman, from being unwilling to be made the instrument of a tyranny which she could not approve. Lady Caroline, concluding that all her trouble with Mary would soon be over, by consigning her to the authority of Lord St. Albans, had thought it unnecessary to supply her place with any one else. Mary had, therefore, her room to herself ; and Lady Caroline was satisfied with locking the outer door, and passing through the closet to her own apartment.—Thus having it always in

her power to break in upon Mary's retirement, and thus making it impossible, as she thought, that she should elude her vigilance.

Notwithstanding this restraint, Mary found a very sensible relief, in being thus left alone. Her room, it is true, was small and dismal, with scarcely any furniture in it, and that of the most inconvenient kind; but she regarded these circumstances little;—her mind dwelt wholly upon the change that had taken place in her situation.

She easily comprehended, that she had been carried to this distant residence, not only for the purpose of breaking off her supposed correspondence with William, but that, by being removed from the observation of the whole world, her parents might prosecute their designs without interruption or censure. She doubted not but that her marriage with Lord St. Albans was irrevocably resolved upon; and she perceived, with dread, that

*and all is paid to the*

the compulsion which she had hitherto imagined impossible, might here be practised without difficulty or impediment. As to the alternative of being shut up for life, her good sense regarded it with all the contempt it deserved. She would have been happy to have believed that such an option would be given her, well assured that it could be designed only as a threat, and that it could never seriously be meant to be put in force. But however she might despite such terrors as could only have power over the weak and the ignorant, she was not proof against those which reason too well justified. She fully believed that there was no violence by which it might be possible to compel her to become the wife of Lord St. Albans, that her parents would scruple to use, or he to concur in. She was conscious that her opposition before, or her protest after the ceremony, would avail nothing; and that she might be placed in circumstances wherein she might be even glad to acknowledge herself the wife of Lord St. Albans.

Hitherto

Hitherto there had appeared so much ridicule to Mary, in the doctrines she daily heard advanced of those laws of society, which were made paramount to the laws of simple nature and good faith ; and the manners, and turn of thinking in those to whom she was subjected, had struck her as being so overcharged with absurdity, that not all her persecutions, arising from them, had been able to rob her of her gaiety. The grief of William, the despair of Eleanor, the illness of Mr. Ellis, were real evils to her ; but the railings of Lady Caroline, the duplicity of Sir James, the assiduities of Lord St. Albans, were oftener subjects of mirth, than of her serious reflection. Having once settled her mode of conduct, and appointed, in her own mind, the period of her enfranchisement, she thought little of her actual situation, and that little frequently led to her amusement. But this lightness of heart was grounded upon the persuasion that she could always maintain her negative, and that, in no circumstances whatever, could she be compelled to violate

violate her faith to William, upon which all her notions of rectitude, or hopes of happiness were founded.

Affairs now wore a very different aspect ; and as she ruminated upon the dreadful possibilities that now occurred to her, the horror with which her mind was filled, suspended, for a time, her powers of reasoning, and made her inattentive to the means that were yet in her power to avoid such misfortunes.

She cast her eyes around the room ; she tried the lock of the door ; almost yielding to the impulse that dictated immediate escape ; but growing, by degrees, more composed, she considered that her friend, the house-maid, was still near her ; that, as she had not been removed, she was probably unsuspected, and that it would be possible, by her means, to apprise William of her danger, and demand his protection.

But even to this expedient she had many powerful objections. Although Mary had none of the refinement of artificial sensibility, she had all the delicacy of genuine virtue.— She shrank from an action that appeared a violation of the diffidence so lovely in her sex ; and she had still a stronger repugnance to any step that might throw her a burthen either upon William or Mr. Ellis. There was no farm taken, no house provided.—Her disposition to industry could avail them little. The most distressing poverty, or the most painful dependance, must be the consequence of their coming together, in their present circumstances. To return under the roof of Eleanor as her daughter, was impossible. Her real parents would from thence reclaim her ; and, by having sought an asylum which she could not maintain, she would only involve those she loved in her misfortunes, without securing herself. As the wife of William, she could alone brave the power of Sir James and Lady Caroline ; but

but to bring disgrace and poverty as her portion, was what appeared to her intolerable.

The night was passed in a succession of these uneasy reflections ; nor could she come to any resolution : yet her conviction, that if she would secure herself from Lord St. Albans, she probably had not a moment to lose, recurred every instant ; and while it made the necessity of determining more urgent, it almost deprived her of the power of decision.

When Lady Caroline came into her room the next morning, she remarked upon the paleness of her countenance, and the heaviness of her eyes.

“ I see you have slept ill as well as myself,” said she.—“ The gloom of this dismal place gives us all the vapours ; but finish your dress, and after breakfast we will take a tour through

through the premises, and see what is necessary to be done to make it tolerable."

When they descended the stairs together, Lady Caroline observed a door on one side of the little hall.—She opened it.

"Oh ! this goes into the garden," said she.—"Sir James tells me it is walled round, and decorated with long canals, fish ponds, and cut yew hedges ; and there's a chapel in it. So my little pious daughter you may say your prayers within holy walls—a privilege you have so long complained of being deprived of. Indeed *I* always go to the church in the *country*, for examples sake ; and when Lord St. Albans' chaplain comes down, which I hope he will, in a few days, all may be done in form and order, and we may have a praying party together."

Mary turned sick at the words chapel and chaplain ; but her emotion was unnoticed by

by Lady Caroline, and they passed together through the saloon to the breakfast-room.

The morning was fine, and the sun illuminated the apartments. All wore a very different aspect from what it had done the night before; and even Lady Caroline declared it was possible to exist. The eating-room was inspected, and found not to be *incorrigible*; and Lady Caroline, having given orders to dispatch some one to the neighbouring town, for workmen and trades-people of different denominations, sat down to repeat over her breakfast those plans of expence and decoration which had made the last night's supper so delicious.

When breakfast was over, to fill up the interval before the arrival of the workmen, she took Mary and Lord St. Albans all over the house, expatiating upon what she *could* do, if she meant the place for a constant residence; but extolling the economy which she meant to practise, in consideration of the  
short

short time they were likely to remain there ; declaring, if it were Heaven itself, she would not continue more than six weeks so far distant from all that was desirable in life.— And she added, “Indeed I hope less than a fortnight will dismiss us from this exile, so that I must hurry the poor toads out of their lives, or we shall be gone before we have any thing ready.”

From this inspection of the house, they descended into the garden, but Lady Caroline found nothing here to interest her ; for it being past even her power to convert straight walks, formal fish ponds, and high hedges, into undulating lawns, flowing streams, and elegant shrubberies, in a fortnight’s time, she gave herself no trouble upon the subject, but contented herself with ridiculing the taste that she had dictated so much methodical stiffness. From this criticism, she was summoned to attend the trades-people, and ordering Mary to continue in the garden with

Lord

Lord St. Albans, she flew eagerly to obey the summons.

Mary, exhausted by the forlornness of her own thoughts, and by the torrent of folly and impertinence to which she had been obliged to listen, no sooner found herself delivered from Lady Caroline, than she threw herself upon an old garden seat, which was placed within one of the arbours, and burst into tears.

Lord St. Albans, who was by no means untouched by the extreme and unusual dejection which seemed to have seized her, was sensibly affected by this mark of her distress, and throwing himself on his knees before her, besought her to open her mind to him, and rely upon his earnest desire to do all in his power to contribute to her happiness.

“ And if I do open my mind to you, and if I do rely upon you,” said the weeping Mary, “ will you not abuse my confidence ? ”

“ Never,”

“Never,” said Lord St. Albans, “by all that’s sacred.”

“Swear not,” replied Mary, “if you would have me believe you. But alas!” cried she, recollecting herself, “what is the confidence that you require of me? And what can I tell you, that you do not know already? The inclinations of my heart are known; I have never disavowed them.—You know well what would contribute to my happiness, yet you continue pretensions, that, if persisted in, must consummate my misery.”

“But why is all this so peculiarly grievous to you now?” said Lord St. Albans.—“Hitherto you have rather sported with my misery, than seemed to apprehend your own, from any pretensions or claims of mine.—Why do I see your removal into the country, the thoughts of which seemed to fill you with so much delight, now overwhelm you with a sadness I never before witnessed?”

“You, my Lord,” returned Mary, “can best answer this question.—You know the extent

extent of those schemes, the bare suspicion of which so sensibly alarms me."

"What is it that you suspect?" said Lord St. Albans.

"Every thing that I most dreaded," returned Mary, "and every thing that the solitude, the distance, the gloom of this place seemed so well fitted to secure the perpetration of."

"Thus I punish you," said Lord St. Albans, suddenly throwing his arms round her, and snatching a kiss, "for making me into a raw head and bloody bones. Is it thus, my dearest creature, that you dress up your marriage with me in the horrors of a scarecrow, and yet expect to escape without chastisement?"

"My marriage with you, my lord," said she, struggling to disengage herself, "is what will never take place. There can be no marriage where there is no consent of will; and mine, I am sure, will always declare against you."

"What would you have me do?" said he. "Let me tell you, you are a very foolish girl."

“ Let us talk over this matter quietly,” said Lord St. Albans.—“ My passion for you, knows no bounds ; you *must* be mine ; your scorn, your disdain, serve but to heighten your charms.—But I seek not alone my own gratification : a motive, not less powerful, is the ardent desire I have to rescue you from a fate unworthy of you, and which, in some future hour, you will yourself bitterly deplore.—Unwillingly you may become my wife, but grateful will you soon be, to find yourself so.—I will speak plainly to you.

“ You are now placed in a situation beyond all human help.—Your intercourse with those who you think your friends cut off.—Your parents resolved to make you suffer the extremity of their displeasure, rather than forego their views. Opposition will entail upon you a succession of severities that you hardly dream of. Never did I see so inflexible a temper as Sir James’s ; never so unpitying a heart as Lady Caroline’s.—Were I to withdraw my claims, I should not lessen your sorrows ; for be assured, they will both

both rather see you in your grave, than the wife of that peasant, whom they so much abhor. In my arms you can alone find shelter from their severity. I do not presume, at present, to say I offer you happiness, but assuredly I offer you less misery than your obstinate rejection of my love will bring upon you; and if the utmost tenderness, the fondest indulgence,—if riches, rank, and liberty, are preferable to unpitying severity, to harsh controul, to powerless despised seclusion, I here, on my knees, beseech you, as you regard your own happiness, not to reject it."

Mary was ready to sink, on having so lively a picture of all she feared thus presented to her eyes.

"I have concurred in the plan of removing you to this place," continued Lord St. Albans, "in the hopes of having an opportunity of laying all this before you; and convinced as I am, that your marriage with me

is the only means that can rescue you from sufferings I would rather die than you should undergo, it is more for your sake than my own, ardently as I long to call you mine, that I declare nothing shall turn me aside from my purpose of making you my wife. My chaplain will be here in a few days ;— every thing is prepared ; you must be mine. If not in generosity to me, in pity to yourself, be so without very apparent reluctance, or violent opposition. I will not ask for your love, until my conduct towards you shall deserve it, nor expect your gratitude, until you are convinced, by experience, of the obligations that you owe me."

" Never will I give you my love," cried Mary ; " never, I fear, will you be entitled to my gratitude ! All I dreaded I find is true. But were the evils with which you threaten me ten times greater than they are, or could I give credit to all that you insinuate, they could not subdue my resolution never to be your's ; they could not blind me to the duplicity, the selfishness, the unfeelingness of

your

your character: they could not make me forget the sincerity, the disinterestedness, and the tenderness of him who will rule every emotion of my heart, while it continues to beat. I am not the fool or the coward that you take me for. I am not to be duped by the pretended generosity of your motives;—by the softness of your manners; by your insinuating words or looks. I am not to be terrified by the evils with which you threaten me. My very fears, indeed, are against you. Where is the misfortune that I would not embrace, rather than become your wife?—My lord, you know me little. I am not the inconsequent, rude, thoughtless girl, that my youth and my gaiety may have led you to believe. In resolving to adhere to my first engagements, it is not that I yield to the impulse of a passion that knows not how to appreciate the merits of its object. My choice is rather the pupil of reason, than the offspring of fancy; and while I know how to distinguish vice from virtue, be assured I shall adhere to William, and reject your lordship."

So saying she arose ; and in spite of all the entreaties Lord St. Albans could make use of to the contrary, walked hastily, and in silence, to the house.

“ One word, I entreat you,” said Lord St. Albans, as he opened the door of the hall for her to pass.—“ One word ;—I entreat you to hear me.”

“ Not *half* a word,” said Mary, haughtily, “ will I ever again willingly hear from one who has confessed himself the abettor of designs which are a disgrace to human nature.”

And with these words she turned up stairs, and went into her own room, leaving Lord St. Albans more than ever enamoured of her beauty, and astonished with the dignity of her spirit.

END OF VOL. II.



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